

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

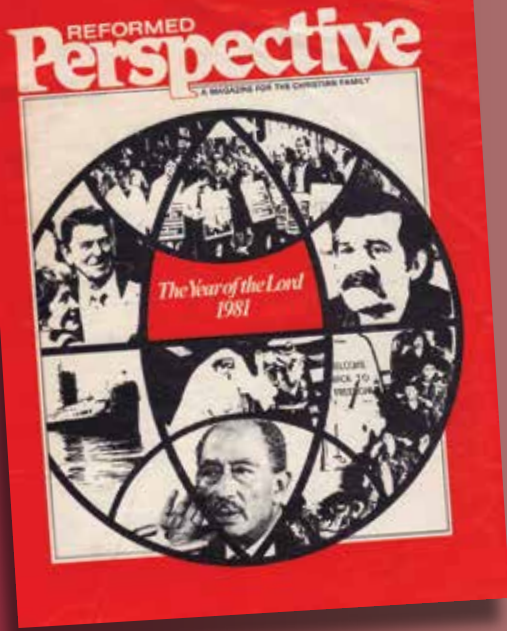
JUN-AUG 2022
Volume 41 Issue No. 4

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 40+ YEARS

THE
NEW REFORMATION
CATECHISM ON
HUMAN SEXUALITY

by Christopher J. Gordon



Reformed **PERSPECTIVE**

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published bimonthly by the Foundation for the publication of a Reformed Social-Political Magazine (Reformed Perspective Foundation).

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Pro Ecclesia Publishers, PO Box 189, Kelmescott, W. Australia 6111

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Registration: ISSN 0714-8208
Charitable Organization under Canada
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Registration No. 118929272RR0001

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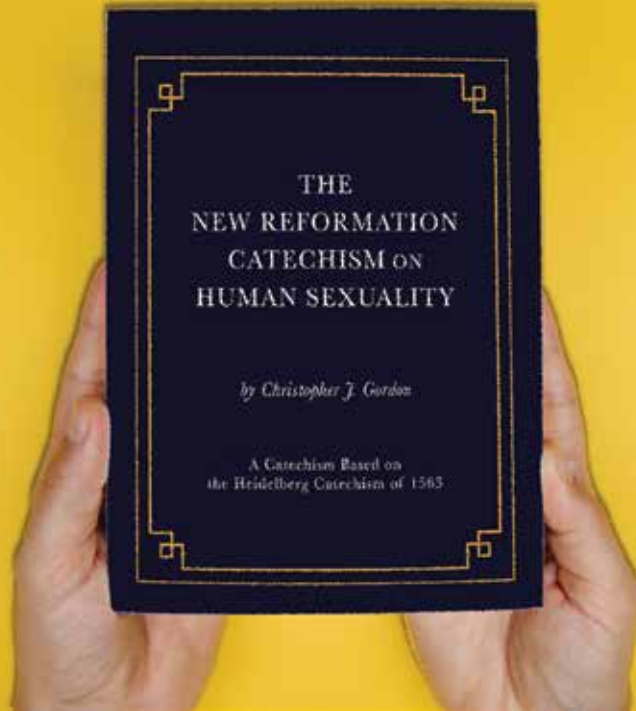
1982-2022

This year RP is celebrating 40 years of exploring and receiving God's goodness and faithfulness!



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 7-4





A CATECHISM BASED ON THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM OF 1563

P.11

by Christopher J. Gordon



INFANT BAPTISM AND THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

- Clarence Bouwman

P.33



YOU HAVE TO BE THERE

- Jonathan Van Maren

P.42



DON'T LET THE CULTURE TRAIN UP YOUR CHILDREN IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO P.8

- Kevin DeYoung

FROM THE EDITOR P.4

- Jon Dykstra

IN A NUTSHELL P.50

8 TIPS FOR TRAVELLING WITH THE FAMILY P.27

- Sharon Bratcher

FILM REVIEWS P.46

RP'S 52 IN 22 CHALLENGE: PART II P.56

Confounded by one question

Matt Walsh's new documentary is a must-see for our high school grads

What is a woman?

That's the question that confounded US Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson earlier this year, and it's the same one that Matt Walsh tried to get someone – anyone – to answer in his new documentary. Whether it was a college professor, a surgeon, a counselor, or even the thousands of attendees at the National March for Women – they'd rather walk away than give wrestle with this doozy of a stumper.

But what the smartest folk in the West couldn't answer, African tribesmen could. And Walsh's wife. And your toddler.

And that, right there, is the reason our young people need to see this documentary: to see the wisdom of the world exposed for the arrogance that it really is. When our kids head off to college or go straight to the workforce, smart people they meet might say bizarre things, whether it's "men can have babies too" or "no one know when life begins." It'd only be natural, if they have any humility in them, to start to wonder, Am I the only sane one...or is everyone else right? What an encouragement it'll be then, to see Matt Walsh stand up against the nonsense, and do so completely unflustered.

Walsh's deadpan delivery turns many a moment from simply illuminating to downright hilarious. How can you not laugh when Walsh poses his "What is woman?" question to a lady identifying as a gay man (i.e., a woman attracted to men, who is pretending to be a man attracted to men). She was scoffing at him right from the start for even having the gumption to ask such a question of her... since she said she was a he.

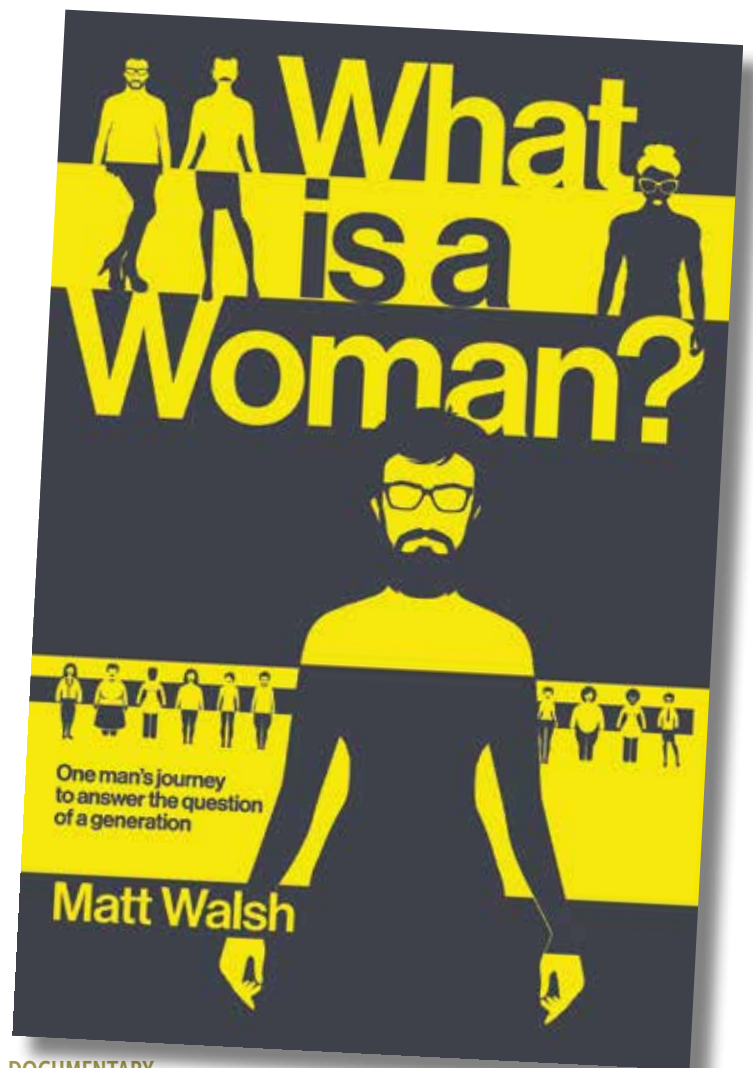
Confused woman (CW): "You should be asking women what it means to be a woman..."

Walsh: "I'm asking all kinds of people. Can't anyone have an opinion about it?"

CW: "Only people who are a woman. Gay men don't know nothing about what it means to be a woman."

Walsh: "...So you're saying if you're not a woman you shouldn't have an opinion?"

CW: "How does a guy get a right to say what a woman is?"



DOCUMENTARY
2022 / 95 MINUTES
RATING: 9/10

Women only know what women are!"

Walsh: "Are you a cat?"

CW: "No."

Walsh: "Can you tell me what a cat is?"

Faced with either pretending she didn't know what a cat was, or backing down on her notion that one can only identify something if you are that something, she chose "C" and hoofed it out of there.

This is how Walsh dismantled the opposition, with pointed questions, and it's a tactic worth noting. When your opponents are spouting nonsense, the very best thing you can do is ask them to explain themselves. This is also an apologetic tactic with a long pedigree: by one count Jesus, though He was the very source of wisdom Himself, still asked more than 300 questions in the Gospels. He wasn't asking because He was looking for information; His questions were designed to uncover others' ignorance.

CAUTIONS

While He liked asking questions, Jesus did also offer answers. The one glaring flaw to this film is that Matt Walsh



A \$5 sticker being sold at DailyWire.com promotes the film by concisely summing up the other side's stance

doesn't, or at least, he doesn't give viewers the answers they most need. Fortunately, what Matt won't explain, God does. In the Bible's first chapter we hear that God assigns gender, and no one else (Gen. 1:27). Further on we read that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10a). That, there, explains these dumb geniuses – they've rejected God's Truth, so all they have left to offer is foolishness.

Why doesn't Walsh offer God's Truth? As he has explained elsewhere, Walsh doesn't believe it's effective to offer biblical answers to people who don't hold to the Bible. However, Walsh does keep pitching logic and reason even though the Left doesn't hold to those either. So why does he bother then?

In Romans 10:14, we see that the Apostle Paul knew how to use pointed questions too. He asks:

How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?

The world is caught up in some crazy lies, but how can they ever turn to God's Truth if we aren't willing to share it with them? This isn't about screaming Scripture at people. What it would involve is acknowledging God – Walsh could have improved his film immensely by adding as little as a line or two to the effect of "Our sex is assigned by God, and when you deny that fundamental reality, then you descend into all

these sorts of insanity."

Much more could be said, and further on in this issue of the magazine we have a fantastic tool – Pastor Chris Gordon's *New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality* – that could equip us and our children to be able to give great godly answers. But whether we say a lot or say only a little about God, He needs to be the foundation of what we do say. It's not enough to expose the lie; the world needs to be pointed to the Truth!

Other cautions are of a more minor sort. There's some language, with a horde of women at the National Women's March chanting "Asshole, asshole" at Walsh. There's also an interviewee on a street corner in San Francisco who is wearing only a strategically placed sock. After the initial distant wide-angled shot, the rest of the interview is mercifully shown closer and higher up. There's also a page of sex-ed material shown from a distance that includes a cartoonish image of two naked guys on top of each other (this is part of a curriculum meant for kids 10 and up).

Finally, the overall topic matter is often... perverse. While the evil being done is generally discussed with restraint, it's still too much for our younger children to hear. This is only for adults and older teens.

CONCLUSION

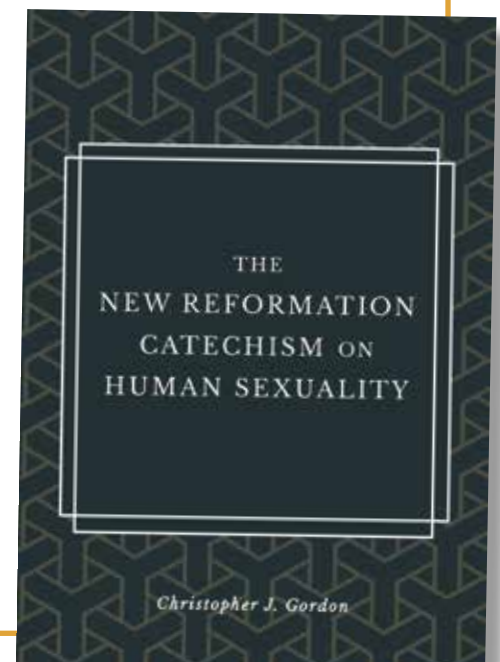
Walsh balances out the perverse with some comedic moments. These are laugh out loud, whether it's Walsh at the National Women's March futilely canvassing the crowd of

What's Inside

Reformed Perspective is excited to be able to share the entirety of Rev. Christopher Gordon's *The New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality* with our readers. You can find it starting on page 11. We know this is a tool for our time that ministers, and also parents, will be eager to use to arm and equip the next generation. As Rev. Kevin DeYoung explains on page 8, it isn't a question of whether our children will be "catechized" – whether someone will pass along their values to them – but only *who* they will be catechized by. We can all be grateful then, for what Pastor Gordon has crafted here, addressing the hottest of hot topics – sex and gender – precisely and concisely offering God's direction. This is something dad and mom can put to use in after-dinner discussions, or teachers could raise in class, or perhaps pastors could use as a resource for the afternoon sermon.

We're doubly excited, first to be able to share it with our readership of 6,000+ households, and second because once it is in their hands, that can't help but get the word out about this valuable resource. We echo the sentiments of ARPA Canada's Director of Law and Policy André Schutten who wrote:

"In my work with ARPA Canada, I have travelled the country over the past year and a half, presenting to hundreds of church leaders on the issue of conversion therapy and the religious battle of our day between the gnostic and pagan humanist's view of human sexuality and identity on the one hand and the Christian and biblical view of sexuality and identity on the other hand. I have been asked many times whether it was time for a new, additional catechism or confessional document to address the contentious



thousands for anyone who might be able to tell him what a woman is, or his interaction with African tribesmen who want to be polite, but don't know what's wrong with the clueless American who doesn't even know what a woman is.

By the end of the film, Walsh has only gotten a handful of answers to his title question, but one of the best comes from Jordan Peterson. *What is a woman?* "Why don't you marry one and find out?" It's a fantastic acknowledgment of the wonder that is the male/female divide. God made us different, then has the two become one, and tells us it is a great mystery (Eph 5:32). Sure, we have different chromosomes and genitalia but what a woman is, is so much more than just that. That there is mystery means marriage is an opportunity for investigation, discovery, and more wonder. But that there is mystery doesn't mean there's any confusion about whether a man can become a woman, or vice versa.

What is a Woman? is only available to "Insiders" at The Daily Wire (DailyWire.com). I became an Insider, chose the

monthly billing option, paid my \$14, watched the film, and it was so good I watched it again with 19 others, so \$14 was quite the deal. Now I'll cancel before I get billed again for next month.

Why watch? So our young people can understand just how much of what we're up against is simply intimidation and scorn. There is nothing substantive to transgenderism, and the other side can only win the debate by avoiding it at all costs. Young people heading off to university need to know that though your professors might be brilliant, that's no guarantee that they are wise. RP

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the transgender position? And what are their best arguments for it?
2. How does Walsh attack their position? What's a takeaway – a tactic – we can borrow from his approach?
3. A common defense of transgenderism is the statement, said by a parent whose child wants to "transition": *I'd rather have a living son than a dead daughter.* What are the assumptions and problems with that statement?
4. US Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson couldn't define what a woman was, explaining that "I'm not a biologist." Walsh does better but offers what's basically a biological answer. Is that sufficient? Why/why not?
5. What are Walsh's objections to transgenderism? Can you think of any ways the other side might counter his objections?
6. What does God have to say about male and female, transgenderism, and gender identity?
7. Why do you think Matt Walsh never mentioned God? Is it because the world has no interest in the Bible? Leading question: If the world doesn't recognize logic and reason, should we stop presenting logical arguments too?
8. How can we best help a world that is so very confused on this issue?

◀ religious questions of our day. To those who ask these questions, I wholeheartedly recommend this book as a resource that fits the bill.

"My unsolicited advice is that every church should purchase and distribute copies of this catechism to every family who sits in their pews and, more importantly, take the time to teach through it. The men and women, teenagers, boys and girls in our pews are being daily catechized by the dominant institutions of our society to accept wholly or in part the pagan or gnostic view of human sexuality and identity. It is a destructive theology. Our historic confessions do not grapple with this religious debate in sufficient measure (and understandably so - the challenges of our day were not theologically pressing or controversial at the time of the Reformation). We can benefit from new resources that equip us to know and understand what God teaches about who we are and how we should live, and why His way is good, true, and beautiful.

"Some Reformed Christians might be uneasy with the idea of a single person writing a catechism like this, preferring instead a document vetted by a larger group of churches (a federation or denomination). But to that

I point out that two of the three confessional documents of Reformed Churches were written by only one or two men (the Belgic Confession by Guido de Brès, and the Heidelberg Catechism by Zacharias Ursinus, with the help of Caspar Olevianus). While broader assemblies and synods deliberated over making these catechisms or confessional statements theological standards, these broader assemblies did not commission the original drafts. So, in the case of this new resource, we have a theologically astute pastor drafting a much-needed resource for the church to clarify a theological assault on Christian teaching, helped and advised along the way by a large group of theologians. The end product will be a blessing to any church that picks it up. Whether this catechism should rise to the level of a confessional standard is another matter."

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Ligonier.org/search

The screenshot shows the search results for 'the trinity' on Ligonier.org. The page features a navigation bar with a 'MENU' button, a search bar containing 'the trinity', and a 'SIGN IN' button. The results are organized into several sections:

- Article:** 'Is the Trinity a Contradiction?' by R.C. Sproul, dated MAR 17, 2021. The description asks if the doctrine of the Trinity is an irrational contradiction and mentions that R.C. Sproul answers an objection to the Christian faith. A video thumbnail for 'ULTIMATELY WITH R.C. SPROUL' is shown.
- Magazine:** 'December 2019 Tabletalk' by various authors, priced at \$3.00. The description states that the December 2019 issue of Tabletalk will explore the topic of God in three persons: the blessed Trinity. A thumbnail for the magazine is shown.
- Lectures:** 'The Mystery of the Trinity' by R.C. Sproul. The description notes that many people unknowingly offer heretical answers to questions about the Trinity. A thumbnail for the lecture is shown.
- Paperback:** 'What Is the Trinity?' with a note that it is also available in another format. A thumbnail for the book is shown.



DON'T LET THE CULTURE TRAIN UP YOUR CHILDREN IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO

by Kevin DeYoung

Our family loves to watch the Olympics. As we've watched the last several years, we've been noticing how different each Olympics has been even from the last time they were held. It seems more and more like every commercial has a rainbow flag or two men holding hands or someone who looks like a woman but has a beard. All of the sexuality is right there in your face as if this has been around forever and is wonderful. This made me start reflecting on how our world is catechizing us.

THE WORLD'S CATECHESIS

No matter how many limits you put on screen time, if your kids are living in this world, I can guarantee that the world is catechizing them. This doesn't happen in a formal way where the world is giving questions and answers, and kids memorize it. That would actually be easier. You could simply tell them, "Don't read the world's catechism."

Instead, it does it through commercials. It does it through music. It does it through memes. It does it through YouTube clips. David Wells said that

worldliness is whatever "makes sin look normal and righteousness seem strange."¹ And that's what our world does. It doesn't give us a discursive argument: here's why you should accept this sin. What it does instead is normalize it. That's a type of catechesis (which is just an old word that means training or discipleship or instruction).

The question is not whether our children are being catechized or not. It's whether we are going to catechize them ourselves, or if we are going to let the world do it. Even if you homeschool your



The world catechizes our children “through commercials. It does it through music. It does it through memes. It does it through YouTube clips.”

The question is...whether we are going to catechize [our children] ourselves, or if we are going to let the world do it.

shouldn't have to know what problems are for 18-year-olds or 28-year-olds. So that's a good kind of bubble. Especially when they're younger, I want my kids to feel like the world is relatively safe and makes sense. I want them to have that kind of bubble that allows them to be a child.

On the other hand, by the time kids are teenagers, I want them to interact with the very best of secular ideologies within the safe space of their church and family. My 18-year-old is graduating from high school and

Let's say my kids graduate from their Christian school and leave home, and they've been taught that marriage is between a man and a woman. They have the right conclusion, but they don't have some of the superstructure that leads to that conclusion. They have not been taught the objections to that conclusion or been prepared to meet the sort of people who seem to bely that conclusion. Then they're going to go out into the world, and they will hold to biblical truth for a time, but it will sit very uneasy alongside everything else that inhabits their worldview. And eventually, when it's one biblical conclusion against a thousand cultural assumptions, those cultural assumptions are going to win out.

The world is always deconstructing Christianity. We need to deconstruct the world. I did a talk in a school chapel not too long ago on the slogan “love is love.” There are a lot of people who are really confused about this. They'll say they believe one thing, but when you look on their Instagram page, they're liking the same stuff that everybody else is, which seems to contradict what they say they believe. So we need to unpack cultural ideas such as “love is love.” What does our world mean by that? What's true about that? And what's horribly misleading about that?

ESTABLISHING A SAFE AND LOVING ENVIRONMENT FOR QUESTIONS

We want our kids to feel like the best place to go with their questions is to their parents. We hope they can trust their mom and dad more than a Google search. But that only comes with an atmosphere of love, trust, respect, and fun in the household.

I was once that kid who had questions, and I would take them to my

kids or send them to a Christian school, they're getting the world's catechesis. So we need to be intentional about catechizing them with what is truly good, truly beautiful, truly life-changing, and life-saving, and God-glorifying.

We need to understand that mainstream culture is pushing in one direction. Whether you watch ESPN, your favorite sports team, Avengers movies, or the Olympics, you're going to be pushed in that one direction. The culture is not going to push you to greater clarity or biblical fidelity, especially on issues related to sex and gender.

THE BUBBLE

Where is the line between seeking to protect our kids from this worldly catechesis and naively trying to shelter them in some kind of Christian bubble?

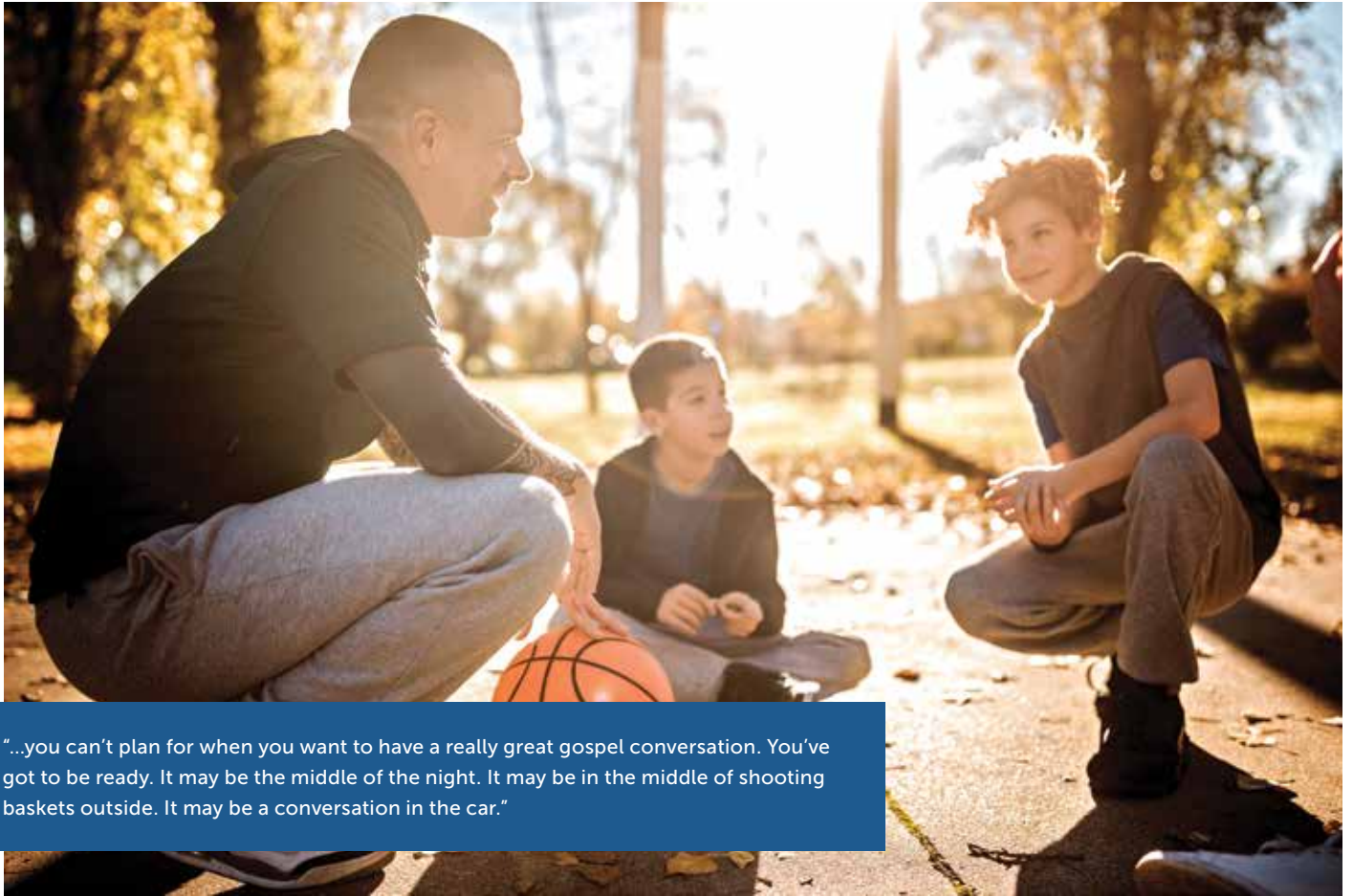
The first issue to understand is that children have the right to be children. On the one hand, my 8-year-old should be able to be an 8-year-old and

going off to college and shouldn't be sheltered from any of those questions. I want my kids to understand that there are hard things people are going to say about Christianity. It starts by being explicit about those things. The ideal is that they've already heard some of the hardest things they could hear about their faith before they run into them elsewhere.

Today those issues are becoming less about the reliability of the Bible or arguments for the resurrection and more about the ethics of Christianity. It used to be that people said, “Christians are dumb. They don't believe in science.” Now it's more often, “Christians are bad. They're hateful. They're bigots. They don't love other people.”

DECONSTRUCTING THE WORLD

In terms of teaching our kids, I think churches and families actually do a fairly good job of giving the right conclusions. What I think we do a poor job of is giving the reasons for those conclusions.



“...you can’t plan for when you want to have a really great gospel conversation. You’ve got to be ready. It may be the middle of the night. It may be in the middle of shooting baskets outside. It may be a conversation in the car.”

parents. What my parents thought of me was important. When I had influences pushing me one way, there was always part of me thinking, I know my mom and dad love me, and what they think matters to me. That wasn’t a result of any one thing they did. We weren’t memorizing the catechism every night. But it was the cumulative effect of their love for one another and for their children throughout the ordinary stuff of life that catechized me.

How do we create an environment filled with intentional discipleship and catechesis? First, plan to have formal times of family worship. In our family, we share about our day at the dinner table. We encourage one another. We pray together. We read books. We’ve done all sorts of these things. But I’d be lying if I said we did something formal every night. We don’t. It’s a struggle for us to do that, but we do try to have formal times of family worship. For instance,

there is the formal aspect to the routine of praying with our kids every night as we put them to bed.

Second, be ready for all of the informal times of catechesis. Recall the old adage that “more is caught than taught.” As your kids are teenagers in particular, you can’t plan for when you want to have a really great gospel conversation. You’ve got to be ready. It may be the middle of the night. It may be in the middle of shooting baskets outside. It may be a conversation in the car. At some point they will ask one of these questions. What you’re hopefully building in your child is a sense of trust. I trust my mom and dad, and I love them, and I know they love me.

Lastly, don’t neglect the fact that the best habit you can give your kids is that they go to church every Sunday. Our kids should not have to ask us, “Are we going to church this morning?” They should know that this happens every

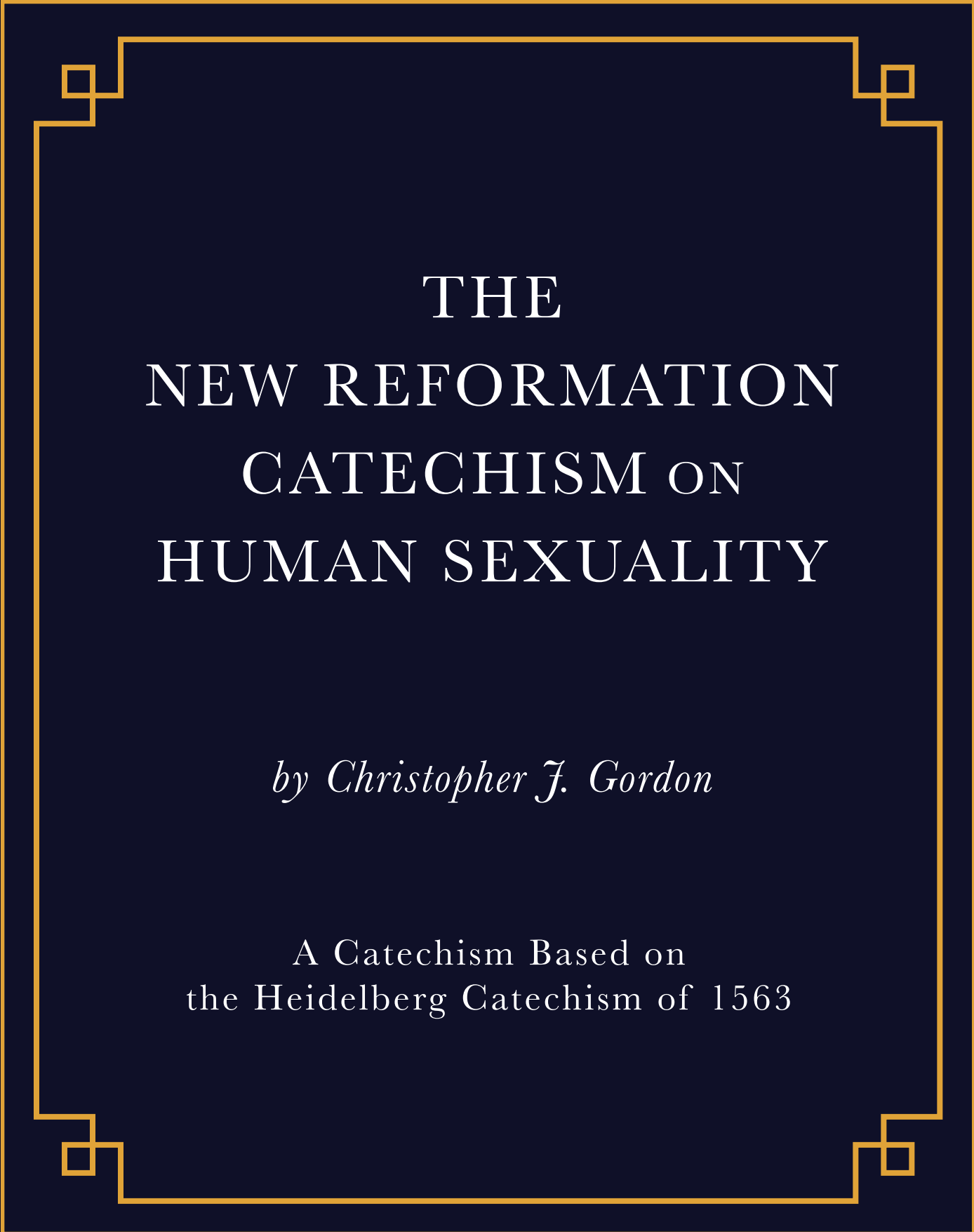
single Sunday. Of course there are reasons to miss church, but we need to send our kids a message about our priorities. And if we are implicitly teaching our kids that soccer is more important than church or that Sunday sports come first, and church fits in when it can, that’s a powerful message we’re sending.

You don’t need to lay it out as a catechism question. But you’re teaching those values and catechizing your kids. RP

NOTES

¹ David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4.

Kevin DeYoung is the senior pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, NC. This article first appeared on Kevin-DeYoung.com and is reprinted here with the author’s permission.



THE
NEW REFORMATION
CATECHISM ON
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by Christopher J. Gordon

A Catechism Based on
the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563

Foreword

“I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful savior Jesus Christ.” So begins the Heidelberg Catechism. Written by Zacharius Ursinus and published in 1563, The Heidelberg Catechism quickly became a manual for Christian living and religious instruction during the Reformation. A catechism focused on helping Christians lay hold of the deepest truths in the best ways was dearly needed during the tumultuous time of the Reformation.

Today’s revolution in theology is not over the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but over sexual identity. Our post-Freudian world maintains without any substantial pushback that sexual identity is the most important truth about a person. Organized under the banner of LGBTQ+, authentic personhood depends on placing yourself under one of these letters, or joyfully and without reservation applauding people who do. The American Medical Association tells us that mental health depends on practicing what you desire, and enthusiastically supporting others who do what feels right in their own eyes is a suicide-prevention strategy. The biblical creation mandate seems a quaint ancient narrative with no binding force when in the United States today there are hundreds of pediatric gender clinics and testosterone is administered to adolescents by Planned Parenthood on a first visit and without parental consent or a therapist’s note.

In contrast to the world’s anthropology, a biblical anthropology understands that after Adam’s transgression (Genesis 3), we, his posterity, have a sin nature that compels each person to love something that God hates. If nothing checks our will, our sinful desires will plunge us headfirst into all manner of spiritual, moral, and sometimes physical danger. No one is exempt from original sin and its consequence. Neither good nor malicious intentions can rewrite God’s call for men and women. Scripture is clear that we are responsible for our inborn as well as our actual sins (Psalm 5:5, Romans 1:18, Deuteronomy 27:15, Hebrews 9:27). Taking responsibility for our own sin is hard and necessary, but because of the way that the world, the flesh, and the devil conspire, it is difficult to know where to start.

And this is where Christopher Gordon’s *The New Reformation Catechism* offers to the church such a timely and pastoral guide. I have no doubt that this means of discipleship will give glory to God and be used by the Lord to liberate many who are held captive by sexual sin. Twenty-three years ago, when I was in a lesbian relationship and at the same time reading the Bible, I would have greatly benefited from *The New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality*. I know that I am not alone in needing this catechism.

May God bless you richly as you grow in Christian liberty. May this catechism help you hold fast to the truth and better understand how the full counsel of God speaks to the godly priority of human sexuality.

– Rosaria Butterfield

Table of Contents

Foreword

Preface

Introduction | Questions 1–2

Part One: Creation | Questions 3–15

Part Two: Fall | Questions 16–22

Part Three: Redemption | Questions 23–26

Part Four: Restoration | Questions 27–41

Preface

The historic creeds and confessions of Protestant churches have served to preserve Christians in the truth of the gospel for centuries. We are deeply indebted to those who took the time to formulate, with great accuracy and clarity, the precious truths of our faith. We are faced with a unique challenge in our times, however, with regard to new movements that are harming the integrity of what we believe.

Of particular interest is how the current sexual revolution has completely overturned what God established at creation as good. This is a unique challenge that has been answered by many helpful writers on the topic. The problem is that not enough Christians are taking the time to read current books that address this issue. Further, few resources are available that are intended to bring families, study groups, and churchgoers together around confessional-like statements that address the challenges of our day.

Creeds and confessions were originally written to provide summary truths of the Christian faith in the face of great theological error. Catechisms in particular provided short, concise summary statements, in question-and-answer format, on some particular doctrine of the Christian faith. These documents are intended to help Christians, especially children and those new to the faith, to have their minds trained in what Scripture teaches on a given point of Christian doctrine. To this day, catechizing is one of the most effective methods of preserving Christians from error.

The culture is daily catechizing us and our children in the ideas they want impressed upon minds. It has been to our own demise that Christians have not taken seriously enough the call to combat this vicious assault on our faith through catechizing God's people in his truth. The great need of the moment is a robust recovery in training Christians in the truths of what we confess.

Many of our older confessional statements do not address our current challenges with any amount of specificity. Sadly, due to the fear that any new confession or catechism will challenge the integrity of the confessional statements that we already have, or compromise our present unity, we have avoided the writing of new confessions or catechisms that address current issues.

What is not appreciated, however, is that catechisms in particular were regularly written by Reformed pastors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Richard Greenham, the great Elizabethan Puritan preacher, second only in influence to William Perkins, wrote a well-known short form of catechizing on the basic principles of the Christian faith. Greenham produced a masterful catechism that helped to provide further clarity on issues that were not specified in ecclesiastically approved Reformed creeds and confessions.

This is precisely the purpose of the present catechism that is being presented to you. There are official, ecclesiastically approved creeds, confessions, and catechisms of the church, that have official authority and serve the churches in the preservation of the truth. This catechism is not an official, ecclesiastical document and does not have the same authority. As a Reformed minister, I have written a pastoral catechism based on the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 to help Christians have their minds catechized in the truth of biblical human sexuality.

This catechism is intended to be used devotionally around the table, providing an opportunity for parents to talk with their children about these issues. This catechism is also intended to provide opportunities for Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and sermon series for pastors in addressing the current challenges surrounding human sexuality.

I have submitted this catechism to many well-respected scholars and pastors to receive feedback and correction where needed. In particular, I would like to thank Rosaria Butterfield, Christopher Yuan, R. Scott Clark, W. Robert Godfrey, Carl Trueman, David VanDrunen, Michael Brown, Doug Barnes, Wes Bredenhof, Chad Vegas, Mark Stromberg, Jonathan Cruse, and Jon Payne for their excellent help in producing this catechism.

I hope you will receive this, dear reader, as a humble attempt to help Christians enjoy the creational, sexual ethic that God established from the beginning for our good.

– *Christopher J. Gordon*
Escondido, CA

INTRODUCTION

1. Q. Why is it comforting that we have a new identity in Jesus Christ?

A. I am being remade into the image of Christ, to have a true identity¹ in body and soul, throughout the whole course of my life, to enjoy God and glorify him forever.²

He redeemed my life with the precious blood of his Son,³ and has delivered me from the lie of Satan in the Garden.⁴

He also watches over me in such a way that he might free me from all sexual impurity as the temple of his indwelling;⁵ in fact, all things must work together to remake me into the image of his Son.⁶

Because I have this new identity,⁷ Christ, by his Holy Spirit, also assures me of God's steadfast love,⁸ and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to enjoy true freedom as a new creation.⁹

2. Q. What must I know about human sexuality and my new identity in Christ?

A. Three things: first, how great my unholy desires and sexual sins are;¹⁰ second, how I am set free from bondage to my unholy desires and sexual sins;¹¹ third, how I am to lead a thankful life of sexual purity in union with Christ.¹²

PART I: CREATION

3. Q. How many sexes did God make at creation?

A. God made two sexes at creation; "in the image of God, he created them, male and female, he created them."¹³

4. Q. What does God require of us in making us in his image?

A. God requires that we love him as he created us, male or female, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁴

5. Q. Why did God make us male and female in his own image?

A. That we might use all of the excellent qualities¹⁵ with which he made us,¹⁶ in true righteousness and holiness,¹⁷ in body and soul,¹⁸ as male and female, for his glory as we exercise dominion over the earth.¹⁹

6. Q. But aren't we able to make a distinction between biological sex and gender in search of our identity?

A. No. God established a natural order in the creation of male and female, that is good for us as image bearers of God.²⁰

To introduce gender as a new category of personhood, separate from the biological category of sex, in pursuit of a different sexual identity,

QA1

1 Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10
2 Ps. 146; 1 Cor. 10:31
3 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2
4 Gen. 3:4-5; John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11
5 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:15-20
6 Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18
7 2 Cor. 5:17
8 Ps. 103:8-10; John 16:25-27
9 John 8:32; Gal. 5:13

QA2

10 Ex. 20:14, 17; 2 Sam. 11:2-4; Gal. 5:16; 1 John 2:16
11 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51; 1 Cor. 6:14-23; Col. 2:13-15
12 1 Cor. 6:15-20

QA3

13 Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18, 21-23; 5:2; Matt. 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-7

QA4

14 Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-40

QA5

15 Ps. 8:3-9
16 Ps. 100:3
17 Eph. 4:23-24
18 1 Thess. 5:23
19 Gen. 1:26-27; Ps. 8:3-9

QA6

20 Gen. 1:26-31; 9:6; Ps. 8:3-8; James 3:9
21 Gen. 1:31; Ps. 100:3; Rom. 1:21-27

is unnatural to the creation order,
and harmful to the purpose for which God made
us.²¹

7. Q But aren't some people born sexually indeterminate?

A. A small percentage of people
are indeed born sexually indeterminate,
due to the Fall,
but such are, by definition,
anomalies, and in medicine
anomalies never negate objective categories of
personhood.

We may not use the existence of
anomalies to change or redefine
the creational order
that God has established as good.²²

8. Q Does God permit us to change our sex?

A. Certainly not.²³
To reverse how God created us as male or female,
due to fallen, unchosen thoughts and
self-perceptions
would be an act of rebellion,²³
and a gross distortion of God's creative handiwork
in specifically forming us for his own glory.²⁵

Further, in the new Jerusalem,
any genital mutilation,
or confusion over sexual orientation identity,
will be restored in our new resurrection bodies.

Therefore, we should not change our sex
since God promises to glorify our bodies,
in everlasting happiness,
as he created us male and female,
in the final resurrection.²⁶

9. Q When was marriage instituted?

A. The holy bond of marriage
was instituted by God
at the very beginning of history in creation.²⁷

10. Q What is marriage?

A. God created marriage to be a lifelong,
monogamous covenantal union
between one man and one woman.²⁸

11. Q Why did God institute marriage?

A. Six reasons:

First, a husband and wife
are meant to live together
in sincere love and holiness,
helping each other faithfully in all things.²⁹

Second, marriage provides husbands and wives
with a proper setting to enjoy each other
with the physical and relational desires God gave to
them.³⁰

Third, by marriage the human race
is to be continued and increased
through the institution of the family.³¹

Fourth, a structure is provided
that enriches society
and contributes to its orderly function.³²

Fifth, by marriage God advances his kingdom
through the loving devotion of a husband and wife,
as children are nurtured
in the true knowledge and fear of the Lord.³³

Sixth, marriage is designed to represent

QA7
22 Gen. 1:26-27

QA8
23 Lev. 18:21-19:28; Deut. 23:1; Ps. 51:3-6
24 Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:5
25 Gen. 2:7, 22; Ps. 100:3
26 Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:35-56; Rev. 21:1-8

QA9
27 Questions 9-13 are adapted from the URCNA State-
ment of Affirmations Regarding Marriage: www.urna.org/file_retrieve/63166; Gen. 2:18

QA10
28 Prov. 2:17; Mark 10:6-9; Eph. 5:25-32

QA11
29 Eph. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-25
30 Gen. 2:23; Heb. 13:4
31 Gen. 1:22, 28; 8:17
32 Gen. 1:26-28
33 Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127:3; Mal. 2:15-16; Eph. 5:22-6:4

the mystery of Christ and the church
that he loves.³⁴

PART II: FALL

12. Q Does the Lord permit sexual intimacy outside of marriage?

A. No. Scripture teaches that marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual union.

Further, God calls us to live decent and chaste lives within or outside the holy state of marriage.³⁵

13. Q What is the Christian position on divorce?

A. Since husbands and wives are united by the Lord's hand, nothing should separate them in this life.³⁶

14. Q But aren't there any biblical grounds for divorce?

A. The Scriptures permit divorce in the irreconcilable circumstances of adultery or abandonment.³⁷

But these are exceptions to the general rule not to divorce.

15. Q Does God permit same-sex marriage?

A. Absolutely not. God ordained marriage only between a man and a woman for life.³⁸

Governments do not have the authority to change marriage into something contrary to what God instituted at creation.³⁹

16. Q With what lie did Satan tempt our first parents in the garden?

A. Satan lied about the goodness of God's creation order.

He presented God as restrictive and oppressive, and our first parents chose to sin through the desire to become their own gods and define their own way.⁴⁰

17. Q What happened to our desires in the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in paradise?

A. All the desires of the human heart, even though they may be unchosen, have become distorted and fallen in the sin of our first parents.⁴¹

These desires cannot be trusted,⁴² since we have a natural tendency to be led away by various passions.⁴³

18. Q But didn't God create us to be happy in following the desires of our hearts?

A. God made us holy and happy;⁴⁴ we, however, accepting the lie of the devil,⁴⁵ have robbed ourselves of this happiness by obeying sinful desires.⁴⁶

19. Q But isn't there a difference between temptation and the practice of evil desires?

A. God requires that we avoid

QA11

34 Eph. 5:25

QA12

35 Gen. 2:21-24; Ex. 20:14; 1 Cor. 7:1-2; Eph. 5:3-5; Heb. 13:4

QA13

36 Gen. 2:21-14; Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:7-9

QA14

37 Matt. 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-17

QA15

38 Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:22; Matt. 19:5; Mark 7:21; Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:31
39 Acts 5:28-29; Rom. 13:1-2

QA16

40 Gen. 3:1-7; John 8:44; 1 John 2:22

QA17

41 Gen. 3:16; Jer. 17:9; 1 John 2:16
42 Rom. 7:14-25
43 2 Tim. 3:6; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 2:3

QA18

44 Gen. 1:31; Ps. 8:6-9
45 Gen. 3:6
46 Gen. 3:16-19; Ps. 14; Rom. 3:10-18

entering into all forms of temptation.⁴⁷

Temptation is not sin
when it originates outside of us.⁴⁸

Temptation becomes sin
when we entertain and welcome
the sinful desires of our hearts and act upon them.⁴⁹

20. Q Are we able to make a distinction between
entertaining a sinful desire and choosing to live in that
desire?

A. God condemns desires that are contrary to his law,
as well as our actual sins.⁵⁰

These contrary desires are sinful
even if they are unchosen,
since they proceed from a corrupt heart.⁵¹

All impure thoughts and desires,
prior to the conscious act of the will,
are considered sin in God's eyes.⁵²

21. Q What kinds of sinful desires and deeds does God's
law condemn?

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew
15:18-20: "But what comes out of the mouth
proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.
For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder,
adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness,
slander. These are what defile a person."

22. Q Will God permit our sinful desires to go
unpunished?

A. Certainly not.
He is terribly angry with our sinful desires,
as well as our actual sins,

God will punish every idle thought,
careless word,
or wicked action
by a just judgment both now and in eternity.⁵³
As the Bible declares,
"For we must all appear before the judgment seat
of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due
for what he has done in the body, whether good or
evil."⁵⁴

PART III: REDEMPTION

23. Q What has Jesus accomplished for me in the gospel
with regard to all forms of sexual sin?

A. Through true faith in the promise of God's Word,⁵⁵
and wholehearted trust in Christ,⁵⁶
by the gospel,
God has freely granted—
not only to others but to me also—
the forgiveness of all my sexual trespasses,⁵⁷
canceling all my guilt⁵⁸
and meriting for me eternal righteousness and
salvation.⁵⁹

24. Q How does the truth of the gospel set us free with
regard to sexual sin?

A. Since I died, was buried, and have been raised with
Christ⁶⁰
through his death and resurrection,
I am set free from slavery to any form of sexual sin.

Christ has broken its dominion over me,⁶¹
and I now live with a renewed desire⁶²
to reckon myself dead to my old way of sexual

QA19

47 Matt. 6:13
48 Gen. 39:6-12; Matt. 4:1-10
49 Gen. 3:6; 4:6-8; 2 Kings 5:20-27

QA20

50 Prov. 6:25; 7; Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 10:6; Gal. 5:16
51 Matt. 15:19; James 1:15
52 Rom. 2:15-16; 8:5; Eph. 4:17-19; Rev. 2:23

QA21

53 Matt. 12:35-37; Rom. 1:18-32; 2:16; Rev. 20:11-15 2
54 Cor. 5:10

QA22

55 John 17:3,17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19
56 Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16
57 Col. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 6:13-14

QA23

58 Col. 2:14; Heb. 2:14
59 Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 10:10

58 Col. 2:14; Heb. 2:14

59 Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 10:10

QA24

60 Rom. 6:1-4
61 Rom. 6:5-14
62 Heb. 8:10-12; Col. 3:1-5

immorality,⁶³
but alive to God in pursuing a sexually pure life for
his glory.⁶⁴

25. Q. Since I am no longer my own but have been
bought with the precious blood of Christ, what new iden-
tity has Christ achieved for me?

A. By faith I am joined to Christ as a new creature,⁶⁵
and so I share in his identity.⁶⁶

In my new identity,
I am satisfied in God's love as his adopted child;⁶⁷
I am to think of myself as purchased, accepted,
valued, and protected;⁶⁸
and I am to find it a great delight to be remade in
the image of Christ
in true righteousness and holiness.⁶⁹

26. Q. Why are all forms of sexual immorality incompat-
ible with my union with Jesus Christ?

A. Since I have become one with Christ in body and
spirit,
any form of sexual immorality
invites that which is profane
into my holy union with Christ.⁷⁰

Therefore, I am called to be one with Christ
by fleeing all forms of sexual immorality.⁷¹

PART IV: RESTORATION

27. Q. What does God call us to do when we fall to sexual
sin?

A. When I commit any form of sexual sin—
even the slightest desire or thought
contrary to any of God's commandments—
I should confess my sins to him,⁷²
eagerly turn away from all sexual sin,⁷³
and seek to walk in the newness of life.⁷⁴

28. Q. Is God angry with his children who still struggle in
their striving to put away sexual immorality?

A. God is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger,
and abounding in lovingkindness.⁷⁵

When we come to God with a broken and contrite
heart,⁷⁶
confessing and turning away from our sins,
God promises to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.⁷⁷

He has declared,
“a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.”⁷⁸

29. Q. What about believers who fight against same-sex
attraction but continue to experience shame and guilt for
these desires?

A. God, in the gospel of his Son,
has announced that there is no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.⁷⁹
Any unholy desire, even if unchosen,

QA24

63 Rom. 6:21; Eph. 5:1-17
64 Rom. 6:11

QA25

65 Eph. 1:7-14
66 Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:9-11; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:17
67 Rom. 8:16-17; 9:26; Eph. 2:19; 5:1
68 Rom. 8:32; 2 Thess. 2:16; Rev. 1:15
69 Eph. 4:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:8

QA26

70 1 Cor. 6:15-20
71 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3

QA27

72 Ps. 1; 32:5; 2 Sam 12:13; 1 John 2:9
73 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3
74 Rom. 6:4; 7:6; Col. 3:1-5

QA28

75 Ps. 103:1-14
76 Ps. 34:18; 51:17

77 Rom. 4:6-8; 1 John 1:9

78 Isa. 42:3

QA29

79 Rom. 8:1
80 Col. 2:13
81 1 John 1:9
82 Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1-5
83 2 Sam. 12:1-13; Luke 15:1-2
84 Jude 22; 1 Pet. 3:8
85 Gal. 6:2

such as same-sex attraction,
is covered by the blood of Christ.⁸⁰

Believers who continue to struggle
against same-sex attraction,
should trust in God's forgiving mercies,⁸¹
and with earnest purpose,
by the strength of the Holy Spirit,
strive to live in the newness of life.⁸²

Further, the body of Christ
should not avoid or shun
those who struggle against any sexual sin.⁸³
Instead, believers, with a spirit of compassion,⁸⁴
should "bear each other's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ."⁸⁵

30. Q Since we have been delivered from all sexual sin,
why should we pursue a life of sexual purity?

A. Five reasons:

First, because our sinful desires do not define us
or constitute our identity
as those purchased by the blood of Christ.⁸⁶

Second, because sexual purity
is the will of God for our sanctification,⁸⁷
as we are being renewed
by the power of the Holy Spirit
into the image of God's Son.⁸⁸

Third, by pursuing a life of sexual purity,
we show that we are thankful
to God for his salvation.⁸⁹

Fourth, we also stand as witnesses,
that those living in sexual immorality
might see in us the holy purity that God loves.⁹⁰

Fifth, as we battle against our sinful nature,
the Holy Spirit strengthens our Christian walk
and we give glory to God.⁹¹

31. Q What is pornography?

A. Pornography is sexually explicit material,
produced to serve lustful desires of the flesh,
activated through the channel of the eye,⁹²
through the looking upon of
naked images of males and females
for the purpose of sexual arousal.⁹³

32. Q Why is pornography so destructive?

A. Because the use of such images
ruins the sexual intimacy intended for marriage,⁹⁴
supports idolatry in the worship of the creature,⁹⁵
dehumanizes men and women promoting abuse,
especially of women,⁹⁶
advances other forms of sexual impurity,⁹⁷
creates idleness in society to the harm of our neigh-
bors,⁹⁸
and degrades the mind into darkness.⁹⁹

33. Q Can those be saved who do not turn to God from
their unholy desires and are unrepentant of their sexual
ways?

A. By no means.
Scripture tells us that
no sexually immoral person,
no adulterer,
no fornicator,
no homosexual,
no abuser of women,
or the like
will inherit the kingdom of God.¹⁰⁰

QA30

86 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:17-18
87 1 Thess. 4:3
88 Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19
89 Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-10
90 Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2
91 1 Cor. 10:31; Gal. 5:17

QA31

92 Job 31:1; 1 John 2:16
93 Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 7:9

QA32

94 Eph. 5:25; Heb. 13:4
95 Rom. 1:24-25
96 Gen. 1:26-27
97 Rom. 1:18-27; James 1:14-15; 2 Pet. 2:14
98 2 Thess. 3:6-12
99 Rom. 1:28-32; Eph. 4:18-19

QA33

100 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 John 3:14

34. Q What is involved in genuine repentance of all sexual sin?

A. Two things:

The dying-away of the old self,
by hating all forms of sexual immorality
and fleeing from it;¹⁰¹

And the rising-to-life of the new self,
by finding great joy in leading a sexually pure life
and, if married, by properly loving our spouses.¹⁰²

35. Q How should husbands seek to love and honor their wives?

A. Husbands should demonstrate sincere love to their wives,
in reverence for Christ,¹⁰³
through the exercise of:
loyalty, kindness, understanding, tenderness,
self-control, sexual purity,
by all means avoiding
verbal, emotional, or physical abuse
or controlling behavior,
and by providing godly leadership.¹⁰⁴

Men ought to be a good example to their wives
of the love that Christ has for his church.¹⁰⁵

36. Q How should wives seek to love and honor their husbands?

A. Wives should demonstrate sincere love to their husbands,
in reverence for Christ,¹⁰⁶
through the exercise of:
respect, patience, honor, encouragement,
self-denial, contentment

and by finding delight in godly submission that pleases the Lord.¹⁰⁷

Women ought to be a good example to their husbands
of the responsive love that the church has for Christ.¹⁰⁸

37. Q How should singles honor the Lord in the situation that God has called them?

A. Singles who desire marriage
are called to contentment and prayer,¹⁰⁹
trusting the Lord in every circumstance¹¹⁰
as he knows best for us,
yet realizing that only Christ makes us fulfilled,
and that ultimate joy is found in Christ whether as single or married.¹¹¹

Singles who do not desire marriage,
are called to holiness in body and spirit,¹¹²
in the special opportunities they have
to give “undivided devotion to the Lord,”¹¹³
yet, should remain open to God’s will to provide a spouse
and change one’s desire for marriage.

38. Q How should the family be maintained to the glory of God?

A. By making Christ the center of our homes through:
love, humility, and patience toward one another;¹¹⁴
godly discipline,¹¹⁵
the regular reading of the Scriptures,¹¹⁶
heartfelt prayer,¹¹⁷
removing all things spiritually harmful from our homes,¹¹⁸
and making Lord’s Day worship a priority together.¹¹⁹

QA34

101 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10; 1 Cor. 6:15-20
102 Ps. 51:8, 12; Isa. 57:15; Rom. 6:1-11; Eph. 5:22-33

QA35

103 Eph. 5:21
104 Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7
105 Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19

QA36

106 Eph. 5:21
107 Prov. 31:10-31; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-4
108 Eph. 5:28-30

QA37

109 Phil. 4:11
110 Prov. 3:5-7
111 Prov. 18:22

112 1 Cor. 6:6-8
113 1 Cor. 7:34

QA38

114 Eph. 4:25-32
115 Eph. 6:1-4
116 Deut. 6:6-9; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:13
117 1 Thess. 5:17
118 Josh. 24:15; 2 Kings 23-24; Eph. 4:31
119 Heb. 10:25

39. Q. What is God's will for parents in training children in proper sexuality?

A. Three things:

First, that parents model before their children a loving relationship, and also hold marriage in honor as it was designed by God.¹²⁰

Second, that parents speak to their children appropriately and sufficiently about biblical sexuality, and proper sexual conduct, as designed for marriage;¹²¹ realizing that our children are facing daily misinformation on sexuality.

Third, that parents guard their children from all forms of sexual immorality and pornography,¹²² and overseeing the use of technology, social media, and other mediums that promote, through cultural peer pressure, a different sexual ethic¹²³ than what God made as good in creation.¹²⁴

40. Q. What is God's will for young adults in honoring their parents in sexual conduct?

A. Three things:

First, that young adults honor their parents by maintaining sexual purity and chastity.¹²⁵

Second, that young adults refrain from pushing upon their parents and adopting the ungodly sexual norms of the culture.¹²⁶

Third, that young adults take delight in the Lord

and in their identity in Christ as singles, waiting patiently for the spouse that God prepares for them.¹²⁷

41. Q. How do we love those who live in sexual sin?

A. We should not avoid or shun those who are mastered by sexual sin.¹²⁸ Instead, we should speak the truth in love¹²⁹ about sexual sin, repentance, and faith in Christ; give witness to the deliverance God gave us from our own sins;¹³⁰ and perform acts of kindness.¹³¹ By our godly living, we should seek to win over our neighbors to Christ.¹³²

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QA39

120 Eph. 5:21-25
121 Prov. 5; 7; 22:6, 15
122 Job 31:1
123 1 Thess. 4:3
124 Deut. 6:6-9

QA40

125 Ex. 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; 7; Heb. 13:4
126 Deut. 21:18-21; Prov. 29:15; 30:17; Col. 3:20; 1 Tim. 3:1-4
127 Gen. 2:22-23; Prov. 18:22

QA41

128 Luke 15:1-2; Matt. 9:13
129 Eph. 4:15
130 Mark 5:19; 1 Pet. 3:15
131 Matt. 5:34-46; Luke 14:12-14; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:16; 1 Pet. 4:9
132 Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2



Canada's Beaver

An internationally recognized rodent has become a northern nation's emblem, but more importantly, the curious nature of this creature highlights the creativity of its Creator.

by Margaret Helder

Most Canadians are rightly proud of the beaver, their iconic national emblem. Indeed, the beaver is a remarkable animal with exceptional talents! Its lifestyle is made possible not only through the wonderful design of its body, but also through in-built skills. The fact is that beavers are the only animals anywhere which can change the landscape to suit their own needs and desires.

BIGGER AND BIGGEST DAM

The skill of beavers at dam building is legendary wherever they live. Prior to 2010, a beaver dam in Montana (USA) was the largest such structure known. It was 652

meters long, 4.3 meters tall and 7 meters thick at its largest extent. For our imperial friends, that's 2,140 feet long, 14 feet high and 23 feet wide!

However, the Montana beavers' claim to fame ended when scientists looking for evidence of climate change, scanned satellite images of Canada's far north lands. These scientists were not looking for beaver dams. Such a thing had never been visible from space. But now they observed a beaver dam in Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta. First visible (in retrospect) in a Landsat 7 image from 1990, in a 2004 image, the beaver dam appeared to be 850 meters or 2,790 feet long.

Jean Thie, a remote sensing specialist, first noted the artifact in a satellite image taken in July 2004, but he did not make his identification until 2007. Eventually, in 2009, Parks Canada was informed of the situation. Thus, it was not until 2010 that Parks Canada released a statement to the world. The terrain is so boggy that nobody can access the site, but aerial reconnaissance has confirmed its existence. The dam must be about 35 years old, built and maintained by generations of beavers.

TO AVOID BEING TASTY TREATS...

Beavers are engineers and builders. With only their teeth and front paws, they

change landscapes so that a safe home can be built and enough food harvested and stored for winter. The lodges/homes are large and conspicuous, often about 5 meters in diameter and 2 meters high. Animals as large and tasty as beavers would surely be a popular meal for predators if all the hunter had to do was wait by the lodge until the beaver came home. Obviously, hidden entrances are essential to survival.

So what the beavers do is to locate the lodge in the center of a body of water. Then the entrances are hidden underwater, well shielded from the view of predators like wolves. Since the beavers are active throughout the year, they must be able to come and go from their lodge even in winter. Since most small bodies of water freeze at that time, the beavers need to find ponds and streams deep enough so that some liquid water remains below the ice. Since such deep locations are hard to find, the beavers instead change shallow bodies of water into deeper locations. This is where the amazing dam-building skills of the beaver are called into play.

First of all, the beavers must select a suitable location for their dam. It is the sound of trickling water that stimulates the beaver to plug the flow. The point that the beavers typically choose is where the noise of moving water is the greatest and the flow rate is fastest.

Beavers are not committed to any one style of dam. They build whatever it takes to block the flow of water. A sluggish flow of water calls for a very wide dam, as we see in Wood Buffalo National Park.

When the current is strong, however, the dam is built with a convex curve in the upstream direction so that it best resists the pressure of the water. The beavers instinctively know how to compensate for stress and strains of the water pushing against the structure. These animals even build outlet sluices for disposal of overflow water. The construction, after all, must not flood the lodge during times of higher-than-normal rainfall. The beavers always make the right engineering choices.

BORN LANDSCAPERS

The beaver are certainly unique in their water management capabilities. These



The oxygen holding capacity of their red blood cells also must be impressive since they are able to spend as much as 15 minutes submerged.

animals do not learn their building skills from their elders. They just know them. In Europe, beavers were hounded almost to extinction and for generations had no opportunities to use their talents, but now, once again they are displaying their full architectural expertise.

In parts of the American West such as Washington, Oregon and Utah, beavers are increasingly being deployed as effective, low-cost agents to restore watersheds. Beaver dams and ponds restore complexity to the landscape, slowing the flow of water and sediment and restoring fish habitat.

Besides brainpower, each beaver needs the physical ability to actually build dams. These large animals, distinctly rotund in shape, weigh between 16 and 32 kilograms as adults (or 35 to 70 pounds). They look awkward on land but quite the opposite in water. Their fully webbed hind feet, transparent membranes that protect their eyes and special valves in the nostrils and ears all facilitate underwater activities. The oxygen holding capacity of their red blood cells also must be impressive since they are able to spend as much as 15 minutes submerged. So don't hold your breath waiting for a diving beaver to re-appear!

Beavers' front paws are small and delicate, without webs. They function almost like hands. They are able to carry objects such as sticks, stones or mud in their hands and they manipulate these into place in the course of their building activities.

TREMENDOUS TEETH AND QUITE THE PAIR OF LIPS

The beaver begins his dam by laying sticks and rocks in the streambed at the desired location. Lots of timber is required

for this project. Here too the beaver is appropriately equipped for his task. His front teeth are hardened with a dark orange enamel (not pretty, but effective). The teeth grow continuously and the outer tips grind against each other. This keeps the cutting edges chisel-sharp. With these tools, beaver can easily fell trees 30 centimeters or even twice that (1 or two feet) in diameter. The trees are used in building operations, and as sources of twigs, bark and leaves for food. Another interesting feature of beaver mouths is the fact that their lips can be closed *behind* their front teeth. Thus, while submerged, they can chew without choking on sawdust or water. This gives a whole new meaning to the expression "My lips are sealed!"

So, people pursue their agendas and beavers fell trees and flood the landscape. We may find beaver activities expensive and annoying at times. On other occasions, we greatly appreciate their work. Wherever they are, we must admit they are beautiful animals. Canada's national emblem is characterized by skill, initiative and lots of energy. It's fun to watch them in action. We do not always realize that God confers on some animals amazing behavior patterns which enable them to follow unique lifestyles. Such is the beaver. All peoples, near or far from Canada, who appreciate wonderful design, will surely see the hand of God in the creation of *Castor canadensis*. RP

This was originally featured in the March 2022 (Vol 49, #1) issue of the Creation Science Dialogue (Create.ab.ca) under the title "Canada's Beaver – Internationally Celebrated."

I'm a six-day evolutionist?

by Jon Dykstra

We all know that fish is a good source of protein, but did you know that some are a good source of information? It's true – I know that evolution is true and it's all because a little fish told me.

The *Astyanax mexicanus* is a cave-dwelling fish. The river-dwelling version of this species can see with the best of them, but this, the cave-dwelling cousin, has adapted to its lightless surroundings by losing its eyes. As a result, the two versions of this fish look quite distinct. However, they can still be interbred which shows that they are the same species.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BLIND FISH

The history of this fish is easy to imagine. At one point some sighted fish made their way into dark caves where they were subsequently trapped. These caves had no light so their eyes served no useful purpose to them. Not only were their eyes useless, having eyes in this environment might actually have been harmful in one critical way: eyes are softer than the rest of a fish, so as these fish bumped around in the dark their eyes were susceptible to gouging and cuts from the rocky protrusions on the cavern walls.

So imagine that a fish without eyes is born into this environment. In the outside world, this would be a disadvantage. But here, in the darkness, no eyes simply means it has no soft flesh to get gouged. This eyeless fish is, therefore, hardier and fitter than its sighted siblings. That makes it more likely that this blind fish will reproduce and pass on its blindness to the next generation.

Over a number of generations this blind fish and its offspring must have competed with the sighted fish until only the blind fish – the fitter fish – remained.

This is a clear example of survival of the fittest, of evolution in action, and it is quite convincing. It is why I am an evolutionist.

EVOLUTION'S TWO MEANINGS

But while I may be an evolutionist, I don't deny that God created the world in six literal days, because, after all, that's what the Bible tells us. I'm an evolutionist, but I'm also a creationist. I was rather shocked when I first came to this realization. I had been raised a creationist and for a very long time I thought that meant I had to reject evolution in any and all forms.

But it turns out that the word "evolution" can mean a number of different things, and some of those meanings do not conflict with the biblical account. There are two very common meanings to the word:

Evolution is often used to describe the small changes that animal species may undergo over time. Perhaps a species of bird might, on average, start having larger beaks – scientists would readily call this evolution. This particular use of the word is sometimes referred to as microevolution. Animal species are adaptable (just think of how dogs have adapted in a variety of ways to meet different needs) so what's described by this usage of the word isn't particularly controversial.

A second use of the word is where the battle actually commences. "Evolution" can be used as a descriptor for the theory that says man evolved from a single cell, which in turn emerged from the primordial soup eons ago. This molecule-to-man hypothesis is sometimes called macroevolution and it directly conflicts with the six-day creation account given in Genesis 1 and 2.

EQUIVOCATION

The reason this all matters is because evolutionists often use examples of microevolution to try to prove macroevolution, their molecules-to-man hypothesis. And similarly, sometimes amateur creationists waste their time (and their credibility) arguing against microevolution because they think they have to be against all things evolutionary.

A cave-dwelling fish loses its eyes and it's called "evolution"? Fine. But such a degeneration has nothing at all to do with the molecules-to-man grand "Theory of Evolution."



The *Astyanax mexicanus* fish is a good example in both cases. Since this fish seems to have adapted to its dark cave environments by losing its eyes, evolutionists think it is compelling proof of their molecules-to-man theory. It is so compelling that this blind fish might bother some creationists.

But creationists need not worry – the blind fish's beneficial mutation doesn't contradict creationism. We live in a fallen world, and that means children and offspring are sometimes born with handicaps via mutations. An eyeless fish is just another normal outcome of this fallen state. Most often these mutations will be harmful but in some rare circumstances, like the *Astyanax mexicanus* fish, the mutation may actually be beneficial. But it is important to note here that the loss of eyes is an example of devolution, rather than evolution. This fish has lost an ability it once had – the part of its genetic code responsible for making eyes has been short-circuited. The molecules-to-man theory of evolution says that complex life arose from simpler life, but this blind fish is an example of a complex animal becoming simpler and less developed.

If this fish is evidence of anything, it is that we live in a broken world (Rom. 8:22).

CONCLUSION

In any debate it is vital to first define the terms. This is particularly important in the creation/evolution debate since it is by confusing the terms that evolutionists make their most compelling case. They can't point to macroevolution in action so instead they use examples of microevolution. Then they act as if there is no difference between the two, calling both evolution.

Therefore creationists have to be careful that when they argue against evolution they haven't made the mistake of arguing against microevolution. Arguing against microevolution is a pointless battle since nothing about it conflicts with animals being "created according to their kind" (Gen. 1), then undergoing small changes, but remaining their kind all the same. Evolution in this sense is an uncontroversial fact.

But evolution on a larger scale – the whole molecules-to-man hypothesis – flies in the face of what God tells us in the Bible, and also what He shows us via the degeneration and decay we see going on in the world around us. So though I might, in a sense, be an evolutionist, then I will be a *six-day* evolutionist. RP

A version of this article first appeared in the January 2003 issue under the title "Why I am a six-day evolutionist."

AFTER EVOLUTION...

Four Reformed figures who accepted evolution and kept on moving

by Jon Dykstra

What follows are very brief bios of four prominent Reformed figures who have accepted evolution and gone on to accept increasingly unorthodox positions.

1. PETER ENNS

Enns once taught at Westminster Theological Seminary (1994-2008) from where the United Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church gets many of their ministerial candidates. After accepting evolution, he now has a very different understanding of the Bible, claiming, "God never told the Israelites to kill the Canaanites. The Israelites believed that God told them to kill the Canaanites." He's also promoted homosexuality on his blog, and noted that embracing evolution and homosexuality both require the same sort of "disassembling" of how we once read the Bible.

2. HOWARD VAN TILL

Van Till taught at the Christian Reformed Calvin College (1967-1998) and was for a time one of the best-known Reformed defenders of evolution.

He no longer holds to the Reformed confessions and, according to a 2008 piece in *The Grand Rapids Press*, seems to have migrated to some form of pantheism, seeing "God not as a transcendent, separate creator, but an active presence within and inseparable from creation."

3. EDWIN WALHOUT

Walhout is a retired Christian Reformed Church (CRC) pastor, and was once the denomination's Editor of Adult Education. In 1972 he suggested:

...it may well be that science can give us insights into the way in which God created man, but it can hardly discover or disclaim that man is an image of God.

In a 2013 *Banner* article "Tomorrow's Theology," he was far more definitive, proposing that in light of evolution, the CRC needs to re-examine the doctrines of Creation, Original Sin, the Fall and Salvation, as well as whether Adam and Eve were real historical people.

4. DEBORAH HAARMSMA

Haarsma was a professor at Calvin College from 1999 until 2012. In 2007, along with her husband, she authored a book that discussed various views on origins and, while endorsing none, treated evolution as at least credible.


She is now the president of Biologos, a think tank that aggressively promotes evolution as true and that questions Original Sin, the Flood, the Fall into Sin, and whether Adam and Eve were actual historical people.

MOVING IN JUST ONE DIRECTION?

Does this mean that accepting evolution always leads to liberalism? Couldn't we counter this list by coming up with one made up of Reformed luminaries who have accepted evolution and stayed generally orthodox?

We could come up with such a list and maybe we'd place the still unborn-defending, homosexuality-opposing Tim Keller on it. But how many others can we think of? And the problem is that a few decades ago Peter Enns might also have been on such a list. He didn't reject orthodoxy immediately. Any such "counterlist" might simply be a list of evolution-believing Reformed figures who don't reject orthodoxy *yet*. Time will tell.

No, if we're going to try to make the case that evolution and orthodoxy are a natural fit, then the better counterlist would be that of liberals who, after embracing evolution, moved in a more orthodox direction. That would be a good answer to this list.

But does that ever happen? 


This first appeared in the April 2016 issue.



T SUSPECT THAT a thousand years from now Christians will look back at the 21st century and say, "How could Christians..."

the Inquisition, the sacramental system, Mariolatry, and so much more. So I wouldn't be surprised if a thousand years from now, or even in 500 years, people look back at our cherished doc-

trines and confessio-
nisms with the mark. New insights and new doctrinal formulations will replace those we now treasure. People in the future will study the same Bible but understand it differently. Something is happening in our world right now that...

A photograph showing a woman with a braid and two young boys in the back of a car. The woman is on the left, smiling. The boy in the middle is wearing glasses and laughing. The boy on the right is covering his eyes with his hand, also laughing. The car's interior and windows are visible.

by Sharon Bratcher

8 TIPS

FOR TRAVELING WITH THE FAMILY

My favorite travel anecdote came from *Reader's Digest* years ago. An older woman felt overwhelmed while packing to go to Florida with her husband. She said, "George, I can either pack to go, or I can go but I can't do both." Since then, many times my husband has heard me shout out, "George?....." and known what I meant.

Family travel can be a big challenge. The worst family trip I ever took involved three non-walking, whin-

ing one-year olds, a three-year old who accidentally barfed and pee-d on the other driver, a broken heater and three flat tires. After 600 miles, I really dreaded the trip back home. But from experience comes wisdom and innovation, so as the years rolled by, we discovered ways to make the long traveling hours easier to handle. God has given us creative minds that spark with wonderful innovations, after which we wonder, "now *why* didn't I think of that sooner?" Then, just as I am doing now,

we share them with others who might benefit.

There are *so* many ways to help your family prepare for a long trip, that the instances of unpleasantness can be greatly diminished, and the firm hand only needed on occasion. Even traveling with one-year olds can be somewhat improved, though they will never understand why they have to sit still all the time.

So here are 8 ideas that will help during the travel time.

A day or two before you go, talk about what the ride will be like...

1. BEFOREHAND, TALK THROUGH THE TRIP WITH YOUR KIDS

A day or two before you go, talk about what the ride will be like: “We’re going to be in the car *alllll* day. Breakfast, lunchtime, nap time, and dinner time, and we’re *even* going to watch the sun go down!” Talk about how they might feel and what they will encounter, and joke about what they might be tempted to do. Emphasize the importance of getting along when in close quarters.

Talk about safety hazards like screaming children, or not heeding the call to “Silence!” when driving directions are being discussed or you’re facing the border guard. Talk about watching for traffic and not getting lost at rest stops.

Knowledge enables children to know what to expect and it gives you information to refer back to when necessary. Pray together beforehand and on the road, thanking God, and asking Him for safety, wisdom and strength.

2. STUDY YOUR DIRECTIONS/ MAPS AHEAD OF TIME

Nothing brings up anger or harsh words between mom and dad like arguing over directions. Plan ahead – this is valuable even in an age of GPS, to think through where you want to stop, and what breaks you might want to take (are there any sights to see, or maybe a nice park to take a break in, a nice restaurant to stop for dinner?). And if there are mistakes, be forgiving and “go with the flow.” It is helpful to have maps of the area in case you end up in the middle of nowhere with NO signal! Maps are also helpful to get a real “feel” for how places are connected which you cannot see well on a tiny screen. And they are great for enhancing the kids’ geographical knowledge, which you cannot quite do on a tiny screen.

Remember that children hate listening to their parents argue; if it’s necessary to “clear the air,” perhaps it can be done away from the children.

3. MAKE EVERYTHING AS SPECIAL AND COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE.

Choose books, toys, food and games that are unique so that the novelty will enthrall them. Our family visited a used bookstore a few weeks before each trip. Each child chose about six 50 cent books and then, to their chagrin, I packed them all away until it was time to leave! A three-year-old will enjoy a Magna Doodle, and can manage an audiobook with headphones. Played over your car stereo, audiobooks from the library are a wonderful way for the whole family, even the driver, to pass the time.

Played over your car stereo, audiobooks from the library are a wonderful way for the whole family, even the driver, to pass the time.

Each child can have a zippered bookbag with a coloring book and colored pencils (or markers if you trust your kids!). Add two small toys with no little pieces (one for each hand,) and a favorite stuffed friend. Some like electronic games, or maybe your car has a DVD player: be sure to choose games and films that are new to them, that keep their attention. If they aren’t on screens normally, this can be a special treat.

Find some word or singing games to teach them. Be sure to play the silly ones that they suggest and enjoy. We

once sang “Hey, ho, nobody home” for 20 minutes straight just to see if we could do it.

Bring small pillows for everyone, and make sure whoever is always cold has a hoodie or blanket to put over her. Carry a roll of paper towel and some plastic bags for “whatever.”

4. A PARENT SITTING IN THE BACK CAN BE HELPFUL

I turned around so often while seated in the front seat that I began to wonder whether I should wear my shoulder harness across my front or my back side.

Having Mom or Dad sit in a middle or back seat can actually alleviate a lot of problems, especially with the little ones who need the physical assurance of extra kisses or holding someone’s hand. Playing games also becomes easier and more fun for the kids because Mom or Dad is involved.

It’s also easier to pass around the food to everyone and collect up all of the trash. You might rotate seats at every stop, because whoever gets a turn in the front seat will feel very special.

5. HAVE RULES AND PLANS

Yes, it’s hard to sit in a car all day, but that doesn’t excuse bad behavior. We still have to love one another, and put others first. The loss of privilege that comes from arguing or disobeying might include not being allowed to speak for a set amount of time.

Take charge of a simple, flexible daily plan. “Let’s sing for awhile.” “Now we’re going to listen to *Prince Caspian* for about an hour.” “We’re stopping at a rest stop in five minutes – everyone put

away your toys and books *now* and get your shoes on.” “After lunch it’s naptime or quiet reading.”

Don’t forget to read God’s Word after each meal and pray. You have *plenty* of time for discussion or related Bible games: why not make use of it?

After two summers of driving eight or so teenagers from Philadelphia to Ontario for a “Campfire! Summer Bible Camp” I learned that everyone got rowdy late at night after the last rest stop because there were less than two hours left on the trip. The third summer I made a rule: “No talking at all after the last rest stop – you may sleep, read with the ceiling light, or listen to a walk-man.” I also outlawed 32 oz. Cokes for the entire trip after *some* people began needing more frequent relief.

6. EAT IN THE VEHICLE AS YOU DRIVE

When you stop, you need to stretch and run and hug and throw a frisbee, and look at the flowers and license plates around you, *not* sit and eat.

Eating is fun, and doing it while riding passes the time very nicely. I learned the hard way that it’s also not a good idea to eat at the rest stop and then let the kids run and roll down hills right afterwards. Enter the need for paper towels. No wonder my “mean old mother” never let us do that.

For meals, you might bake or have Mom go into a grocery store bakery to buy fresh muffins for a special breakfast. For lunch and dinner, pack favorite sandwiches and baggies of chips or fruit or cookies – a different kind for each meal. Freezing them the night before eliminates the need for a big cooler. On the other hand, the lid from a hard plastic cooler makes a great lap table for spreading fresh peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to hand around. Think about it: instead of using up more of your valuable pre-trip time making sandwiches, you could use your “nothing else to do anyway” hours stacking meat and cheese and tomato slices on buns.



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7. EIGHT REASONS TO DRINK ONLY WATER (EXCEPT IF THE DRIVER NEEDS CAFFEINE)

Water *rules* over juice, kool-aid, tea, and soda, and they’ll drink it if they’re thirsty. They get plenty of taste variety from their meals. Water is cheaper, healthier, not sticky, stain-free, non-caffeinated, and non-sweetened. It doesn’t speed through your system as fast as other drinks, and it can be used to wash faces, hands and seats. Each person’s bottle can be refilled at the next rest stop or from a bigger container near the parent’s seat.

8. THE FANTASTIC TRIP COMES TO AN END

My children finally convinced me that if we arrive home late at night, it is best to go to bed and empty the car the next day when everyone is rested and happier. The suitcases will wait patiently. The end of the trip is already a letdown for the children, so, while they do need to help with the gargantuan task of putting everything away, it’s also

good to consider their fatigue level and emotions. Have a nice breakfast, divide up the tasks, and tackle the pile.

But maybe you arrive home during the daylight hours, or maybe the car has to be emptied for Dad to go to work the next morning. It still might be best to give everyone a short break to “be happy to see their home,” perhaps coupled with a snack and a hug and a “de-briefing” session.

Later, you might put together a family newsletter with each one writing (or dictating) what happened at the cave, at Grandpa’s, or in the ocean. This helps save the memories for years to come, and it’s a nice gift for any relatives and friends you visited along the way.

Traveling together can form close bonds with shared memories. When parents plan ahead, the possibility for frustration is lessened and a good example is set. **RP**

A version of this article first appeared in the February 2010 issue.

LET'S GET LOUD!

Do all your friends know why they should be pro-life too?

Help them figure it out by sharing these pro-life memes and cartoons

by Jon Dykstra

Could abortion be illegal in America soon? The 1973 US Supreme Court that made abortion legal in America may get overturned, or at least that's what a leaked draft of an upcoming court decision seems to indicate. We should pray that it's true, and make use of the ruckus that's happening right now: abortion, and more importantly, the unborn are dominating the news, and not only in the US, but even Canada. Much of the coverage is negative – the unborn are being attacked by the mainstream media – but even that is arguably better for the unborn than ignoring them altogether. It's still an opportunity – there might never have been a more important time to speak up for the unborn.

But what if you're not much of a talker? No worries. *Reformed Perspective* is building up a collection of memes and cartoons that you are free to copy and publish on your own social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then these will help you speak at least 5,000 in the unborn's defense. They rebut some of the more popular pro-choice talking points, highlighting how the other side's best arguments just aren't very good. Their arguments stink because what they defend is indefensible. As one meme put it, abortion is people being willing to murder babies if that's what it takes for them to have an unfettered sex life. God has written His Law on our hearts, so there is no evading the truth that abortion is indeed murder... and most everyone knows it. Pro-choice arguments are bad, so we can help people by exposing their idiocy.

These memes and cartoons do some of it, and if you can put any of them to use, you are welcome to copy and paste them wherever you will. Find the lot at ReformedPerspective.ca/meme where we'll continue to add to the collection. Email them, post 'em in your blog, print them as a poster, whatever! You'll also find them

on Facebook, Instagram, Gab, and Mewe via the hashtag *#RPprolife*.

What follows are the first five, with a brief explanation of the point each is trying to make.

1-2. MY BODY, MY CHOICE?

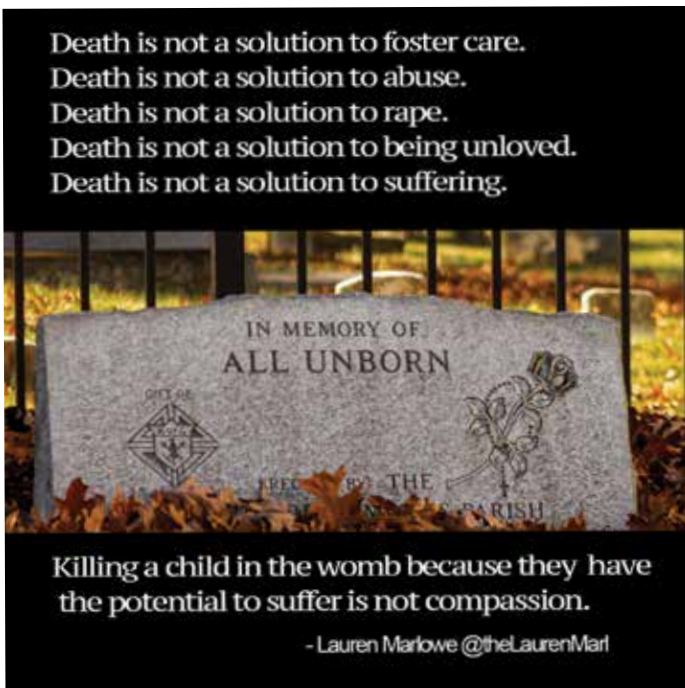
There are any number of answers to the most popular of all pro-abortion slogans, "My body, my choice," most noting that there isn't simply one body involved. But it is important to note, it isn't that the unborn have a head, heart, or legs that make them valuable, as, early on, they didn't have those things. Rather, what makes us valuable (and what is also the only basis for equality) is not what we have or what we can do, but *in Whose Image we are made* (Genesis 1:27).





3. ...OR, TO PUT IT MORE POINTEDLY, MURDER IS NOT A SOLUTION...

This is an answer to the complaint that, if not for abortion, so many more children would be in foster care, or would be poor, or would be unloved. But if killing people is the best way to address those ills, then why aren't we extending that principle and murdering the already-born kids who are also in those situations? Why not? Because we know murder is not a solution, and we know that's not what compassion looks like.



4-5. NO ONE KNOWS WHEN LIFE BEGINS?

The comic below was inspired by a hunting incident involving former Vice President Dick Cheney, as well as an interview with Barack Obama back when he was still Senator Obama. In a 2008 interview, the man who would become the next president of the United States said that he didn't know when life began – it was above his pay grade – and that regardless he still supported abortion. But back in 2006 Vice President Dick Cheney had already illustrated why, *when we have doubts, it is immoral to kill.*

The Vice President made his pro-life case while out on a hunting trip with a man by the name of Harry Whittington. Admittedly, Cheney wasn't trying to score pro-life points – he was trying to shoot birds. But what was a bad day for the birds, and for his fellow hunter, turned out to be an unforgettable defense of the unborn.

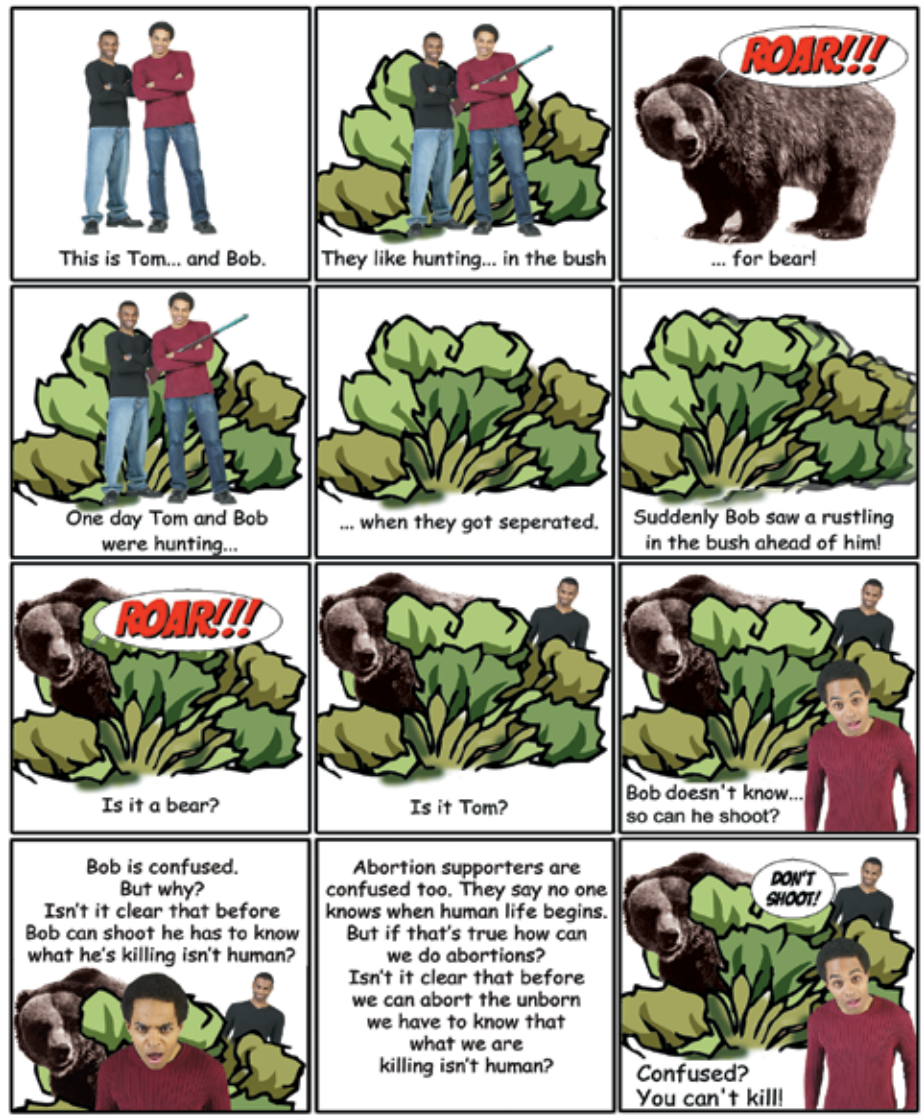
Things took a pro-life turn soon after the two hunters separated –Whittington was searching for a bird they had previously downed. As Whittington returned to the group, a bird popped out of the bushes behind Cheney, and Cheney, without checking first where Whittington was, fired off a shot. That shot may or may not have hit the bird, but certainly impacted Whittington, spraying his



chest and face with birdshot. Fortunately, the 78-year-old Whittington survived his wounds. Cheney went on to become the butt of many, many jokes, including one from President Obama, who said that Cheney's memoirs were going to be titled, *How To Shoot Friends and Interrogate People.*

Everyone, including President Obama, understood that what Cheney had done was foolish. A cardinal rule in hunting is that you can't fire your gun unless you're sure people aren't in your line of fire. Pleading ignorance is no excuse – ***you have to know no human life is being endangered*** or you can't fire. It's that simple. Obama mocked Cheney for proceeding with deadly intent, not knowing whether or not he was endangering human life. But Obama's justification for abortion is just as foolish. His plea that when life begins is above his pay grade means that he doesn't know one way or the other whether what's in the womb is human life. But as Vice President Cheney reminded us, if we're unsure, we can't kill.

In the second comic here the same thought is expressed. Supposing we didn't even know when life began, that would only be another reason to ban abortion. Because if we aren't sure whether or not what we're killing is human, then we can't proceed!



Find these memes and a growing collection of others at

Reformed Perspective.ca/memes

and via the

#RPprolife

hashtag on FACEBOOK, MEWE, GAB, and INSTAGRAM

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by Clarence Bouwman

Infant Baptism and the unity of Scripture

Is infant baptism simply a Reformed peculiarity that ought to be jettisoned in the name of Biblical faithfulness and unity with fellow Christians? What are the grounds for infant baptism?!

Among the readership of this magazine, it's standard fare that parents will have their infants baptized. However, around us are countless Christians who don't think the Bible teaches infant baptism. Then when our younger and not so young members meet these other Christians, and end up talking about baptism, questions arise about whether the Lord actually wants the newborns of the congregation baptized.

It might be pointed out that there is no text in the New Testament commanding the baptism of children. In fact, the New Testament does not even have examples of children actually being baptized!

So our questions become bigger: is infant baptism simply a denominational peculiarity that ought to be jettisoned in the name of Biblical faithfulness and unity with fellow Christians? And if not, what are the grounds for infant baptism?

Key question #1: Is there one Bible or two?

It is true that the New Testament nowhere contains a text explicitly commanding the baptism of children. That there are no instances of children being baptized is debatable, but let's set that aside for the moment. The key question that needs to be asked now is, why would we even expect the New Testament to have such a command?

Funny comment, you say? Well, foundational to the whole discussion on infant baptism is whether the New Testament is the "real" Bible, a book to be read on its own, or is the New Testament to be read in the light of the Old Testament, with both testaments together making up the "real" Bible? In other words, is there continuity between the Old Testament and New, or discontinuity?

Many Christian will, regularly, contrast the New Testament with the Old. The God of the Old Testament is said to be stern and demanding, while the God of the New Testament is loving and merciful. The God of the Old Testament insists on law, while the God of the New Testament gives His Son for our sins. In the Old Testament He had a covenant rooted in blood, one made even with children, but in the New Testament his promises are for those who believe in Him – something little children do not do.

Another result of contrast between Old and New is that markedly more sermons are preached in North America today from New Testament texts than from the Old Testament...even though the Old Testament numbers twice as many pages as the New Testament. Though the Old Testament remains in the Bibles circulating in our society, it's the New Testament

that ends up dog-eared and marked. And since the New Testament does not explicitly speak of infant baptism, this long-held practice of the church falls into disrepute.

Is it indeed true, though, that the message of the Old Testament is somehow different from that of the New Testament?

No. Consider the following passages:

- Jesus says to the Jews: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me” (John 5:39). In this passage the phrase “the Scriptures” can only be a reference to the Old Testament since the New Testament was not yet written in the days of Jesus’ earthly sojourn. The topic of the Old Testament Scriptures, says Jesus, is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus’ teaching was not different from the teaching of the Old Testament, but was the instruction of the Old Testament made plain.
- After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus joined the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In response to their disappointment at Jesus’ crucifixion and their confusion about the empty tomb,

“He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

Jesus’ reference to “Moses and all the Prophets” is obviously the Old Testament Scriptures. According to Him, the message of the Old Testament is none other than that “the Christ had to suffer these things” – and the disciples should have known that. He went on to make plain to these disciples just how the Old Testament spoke of

Jesus Christ. It does not go too far to insist that Jesus’ opening of the Old Testament to these two disciples trickled down to all the apostles and so colored the way the disciples later used the Old Testament in the sermons mentioned in the book of Acts and in the letters they wrote to the churches.

- So Peter in his Pentecost sermon quotes Psalm 16, where David said: “My body also will live in hope, because You will not abandon me to the grave....” Then Peter adds this explanation: “Seeing what was ahead, [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did His body see decay” (Acts 2:26,27,31). Peter realized: the subject of the Old Testament is the same as the subject of the New Testament; both speak of Jesus Christ. (See also Acts 8:32-35.)
- The apostle to the Hebrews tells his readers that:

“Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15).

The apostle’s closing words in this quote are intriguing. The “sins committed under the first covenant” are the sins of the Old Testament dispensation, sins committed while the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law was in effect. Yet how could those sins be forgiven? The apostle insists that it is Christ’s death that sets the Old Testament people free from their sins! How that’s so? That’s so because the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The blood of goats and calves did not by itself wash away Israel’s sins, but that blood directed the Old

Testament sinner to focus on the coming sacrifice of the Lamb of God on Calvary.

The point is this: the essential message of the Old Testament is identical to the essential message of the New Testament. Holy God has a relation with sinners in both the Old Testament dispensation as well as in the New Testament dispensation. This relation is possible in the Old as well as in the New Testament only because of the blood of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament looks *forward* to the Christ who will come (and by His coming sacrifice believing sinners were reconciled to God), while the New Testament looks *back* on the Christ who has come (and by His completed sacrifice believing sinners are reconciled to God). There is an essential continuity between these two Testaments on the subject of how God relates to sinners. Abraham and Moses and David and the rest of the Old Testament saints were Christians as much as Paul and Augustine and Calvin and the rest of the New Testament saints were and are Christians.

NOT NEW, SO MUCH AS RENEWED

Perhaps you will counter that the New Testament is surely called “new” for a reason. Did Jeremiah not prophesy of a “new covenant”? Indeed, he did. “‘The time is coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah...’” (Jer. 31:31).

As a result we read repeatedly in the “New” Testament of a “new covenant” (1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:15). But the word “new” is not to be contrasted with “old” in the sense we use it to say our “new” car is a totally new machine from our “old” one.

The same word that’s translated in Jeremiah 31 as “new” appears in Psalm 104:30 to describe springtime: “When You send your Spirit, ... You renew the face of the earth.”

The same word appears also in 2 Chronicles 24:4 to describe Joash’s plan “to restore the temple of the LORD.”

Because of Israel’s hardness of heart in their service to God, the Lord promised through Jeremiah to make a “new cov-

enant.” Yet this is not one that is essentially different from the covenant God made with their fathers when He took them out of Egypt, but one that reaches deeper into His people’s heart. For this time “I will put My law in their minds, and write in on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer. 31:33). Note those closing words: this covenant is described with the same words as God used for His relation with Abraham and with Moses so long ago (Gen. 17:7; Ex. 20:2). It’s the same covenant – “I will be their God” – yet “new” in that it’s renewed, refreshed, deepened.

JUST ONE PEOPLE

I will, for just a moment longer, belabor this unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament because it is a most vital point.

Writing to Christians of Rome, Paul claims that Abraham “is the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:11) and the context makes clear that the word “all” refers to both the Jew (of the Old Testament) as well as the Gentile (of the New Testament dispensation). Paul adds,

“Therefore, the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16).

We need to understand his point here. The Christians of Rome had no Jewish blood in them and so were not children of Abraham by birth. Yet Paul insists that this foundational figure of the Old Testament was “the father of us all,” Jews and Romans alike. That is: Old Testament believers and New Testament believers have one father, Abraham.

How are we to understand this? The apostle wants us to think of a tree. Because so many Jews rejected Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, God (says Paul) broke those fruitless branches off the tree of Abraham. But since God wanted His tree to bear fruit, He in mercy grafted new branches – Gentiles – into this



“There is, then, one tree-of-faith spanning both testaments, a single tree rooted in Abraham, sustained by faith in Jesus Christ, and bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit.”

same tree. These Gentiles then are as much children of Abraham as were their believing brethren of the Old Testament (see Rom. 11:17-24).

There is, then, *one* tree-of-faith spanning both testaments, a single tree rooted in Abraham, sustained by faith in Jesus Christ, and bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul can elsewhere say that “there is one body and one Spirit ..., one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4-6). The faith of the Old Testament is not different from the faith of the New Testament, no more than the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament. There is a profound and essential unity (and hence continuity) between Old Testament and New.

Key question #2: Short of an explicit command, why would we presume children would now be excluded?

But how does this touch upon infant baptism?

Like this: given the continuity between the Old Testament and the New, one must expect God’s pattern of dealing

with sinners in the New Testament to be same as His pattern of dealing with them was in the Old Testament... *unless God explicitly tells us of a change.*

In relation to the sign of the covenant (circumcision in the Old Testament) He has in fact plainly told us of a change for the New Testament dispensation. But there is no explicit instruction in the New Testament indicating that His inclusion of children in the covenant in the Old Testament is replaced by a different pattern in the New Testament.

That is why I asked at the start whether we need an explicit command to baptize infants before we can adopt the practice. Insisting on such a command presumes that the New Testament is not built on the foundation of the Old Testament. It presumes that in the New Testament dispensation God’s covenant with sinners as it operated in the Old Testament was torn up and an entirely new manner of relating with sinners was developed for the New Testament dispensation.

Yet that premise turns out to be false; on the subject of how God deals with sinners there is between Old Testament and New not discontinuity but essential continuity.

Key question #3: How did God treat the children in the Old Covenant?

Now let's consider what place children had in the Old Testament and what that says about children in the New.

Today's western society looks at persons primarily as individuals, and only secondarily as members of families. The Old Testament picture is different. In the days of Noah, God determined to destroy all mankind, but left one exception: "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8).

Yet once the ark was complete, the Lord instructed not just the single righteous individual Noah to "go into the ark," but his "whole family" was to join him (Gen. 7:1). The phrase "your whole family" included Noah's wife, his three sons, and their wives (7:13). Please note: because of the righteousness of the one man, God had mercy on his entire family.

That pattern jumps into its own in God's covenant with Abraham. God told him,

"I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7).

God's attention was not directed to the individual, but to the family represented in the person of Abraham. As a result, "on that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him" (Gen. 17:23). "Every male in his household" included "the 318 trained men born in his household" with whom Abraham pursued the four kings who had captured his nephew Lot (Gen. 14). That these 318 were also circumcised was, the text says, "as God told him" – and the point is that with His covenant with Abraham God's goodness touched all those whom He entrusted into Abraham's care. The point is that God does not work with isolated individuals, but works in families.

ISRAEL

At Mt Sinai the Lord God renewed His covenant with Israel with these words, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). Yet what was the makeup of the people congregated at the foot of the mountain? Was the content of God's word here valid only for the adults? Obviously not, for in this same conversation the Lord addressed specifically the children also; He told them in the fifth commandment to "honor your father and your mother" (vs 12). Here is the same point: God deals with His people in families!

When the Lord repeated His covenant with Israel one final time before they crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land, He spoke these telling words,

"Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God – your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today" (Deut. 29:9-15).

Notice that the children and the wives, and even the aliens in the camp, are included in the crowd of those with whom the Lord made His covenant. More, that covenant is made not only with those who were present "but also with those who are not here today." That last phrase is not a reference to the mothers or children who stayed behind in the tent, for they were already included in the earlier reference to "your children and your wives." That

phrase is rather a reference to the children yet unborn, those of coming generations (see Acts 2:39). God relates to His people not as lone individuals but as families in untold generations.

So, it is no surprise to hear the prophets speak about future generations. Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying:

"My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever" (Is. 59:21).

Ezekiel shares the perspective: "They will live in the land I gave to My servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever" (Ezekiel 37:25).

Key question #4: How does God treat children in the New Testament?

Jesus' response to His disciples is then predictable. When His disciples sought to hinder mothers' efforts to bring their children to Him, Jesus was "indignant" – literally "livid" – and told His disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14). What made Him so indignant? He was upset with His disciples because the Lord God had sent His Son into the world to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21), and "His people" includes – according to Old Testament pattern – the children of the covenant. The little ones whom the mothers were bringing to Jesus were not little Romans or little Moabites, but little Israelites, covenant children all. That's the reason why Jesus "took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:16). If His Father's reach in the Old Testament included the children in Israel, the Son's reach was not allowed to be any less.

Peter's words on the day of Pentecost are consistent with the picture that arises from the Old Testament. It was manifestly the adults of Jerusalem that demanded the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, and also the adults that recognized their guilt and

asked the disciples what they had to do. Peter's answer is instructive: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

But notice how Peter formulates his incentive to their repenting: for "the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (vs 39). What did the Jews understand by the word "promise"? Steeped as they were in Old Testament thinking, the reference to "the promise" that was for them and their children was plainly the content of God's covenant with Israel: I will be your God.

Notice that Peter does not limit the covenantal promise to the generation standing before him, nor to that generation plus their children at home, but he includes generations still unborn. The generation standing before him needs to repent on grounds that God has made His covenant with them, and needs to repent also on grounds that God has made His covenant with their children after them (including the unborn) – and so those children need God-fearing parents to teach them the Lord's way.

Here again is nothing of the individualism so rife in our modern western society, but instead a deep awareness that God relates to His people in the generations. See 1 Cor. 7:14, and compare Eph. 1:1 with Eph. 6:1 for more confirmation of this point.

INFANT BAPTISMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

If, then, the New Testament shows that children belong to God just as much as they did in the Old Testament – *and there they were circumcised* – and if there's an essential unity and continuity between the Old Testament and the New, we would expect to find in the New Testament instances of infants being baptized just as Ishmael and Isaac were circumcised. Is such evidence available? We're told it's not. But consider the following:

- At the end of his visit with Cornelius, Peter asked, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized...?" Since there were no objections "he ordered

that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:47-48). Who exactly made up the crowd that was baptized? The crowd is described in verse 24 as Cornelius himself and "his relatives and close friends." Does this include children? At a minimum it certainly does not exclude children.

- In response to hearing the apostle's preaching, Lydia came to faith. The Holy Spirit records the event as follows:

"The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home" (Acts 16:14-15).

Notice the formulation: the Lord tells us of one believer and of multiple baptisms, all of them within her household. It's the identical pattern as we discovered with Abraham. Were children baptized with Lydia? The text certainly does not exclude children. On the contrary, we may safely say that if Lydia had children in her household, they too were baptized.

- After the earthquake that shook the Philippian jail, the rattled jailer fell trembling before Paul and Silas to ask his desperate question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their answer: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household" (Acts 16:30-31). Notice how the faith of the one man touches his whole household. As a result, "he and all his family were baptized" (Acts 16:33). In our translation the passage adds that "he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family" (vs. 34). But the Greek isn't so explicit about "his whole family" having believed. The Greek very much places the onus on the jailer alone, and (as in vs. 31) the family benefits from his repentance. Were children baptized with the jailer? The passage allows for only one conclusion: if he had children, they most certainly were baptized too.

We recognize in all these passages the Old Testament pattern of God dealing not with individuals but with families – and His approach to the family is determined by the spirituality of the family's head. As a result, we certainly cannot insist that the New Testament knows nothing of infant baptism.

This becomes all the clearer when we recognize that the terms rendered in the above passages as "household" or "family" appear elsewhere in Scripture with obvious inclusion of little children.

Jacob laments that if the Canaanites attack "I and my household will be destroyed" (Gen. 34:30) – and he's surely not suggesting that the enemy will spare the little ones in his tents, be they his own (grand)children or the offspring of his servants.

Moses reminded Israel that the Lord "sent miraculous signs and wonders... upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household" (Deut. 6:22), and we understand well that the infants of Egypt were as discomfited by the plagues of frogs and lice and darkness as the older of the population.

See further Gen. 7:1; 12:17; 18:19; 36:6; 50:7f; Ex. 1:1; Josh. 24:15 and so many more. The term "household" in Scripture certainly includes children.

Finally, if the point is still raised that the New Testament only explicitly mentions adults being baptized, let the reader recall that the apostles were missionaries engaged in mission work. Even today infant baptism on a mission field is relatively uncommon on the simple ground that mission work is directed at adults. And when under God's blessing the adults come to faith, the household is baptized. RP

CONCLUSION

The conclusion, then, is evident: though there is no explicit mention of an infant being baptized, the New Testament – in line with God's Old Testament revelation – both knows and requires the baptism of little children.

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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

to contending

by Michael Wagner

For decades there has been talk of a “culture war” in North America. This is the ongoing battle we’re having over which beliefs our society will use as its foundation, to build atop them our institutions, laws, customs, and even our art and literature. Many books and articles have been written about this war, explaining it in various ways. Some people probably just tune out the controversy, not fully understanding its implications.

However, it is possible to provide a summary of the main issues at stake, so that everyone can understand the basic conflict and react appropriately. Such a summary has been written by Peter Kreeft, a professor of philosophy at Boston College. He offers it in his 2002 book, *How to Win the Culture War: A Christian Battle Plan for a Society in Crisis*. While Kreeft is a Roman Catholic, and his theology openly affects his analysis, he gets the key issues right.

2 MAJOR FRONTS, 1 CENTRAL ISSUE

Since the late 1960s, the two major fronts in the culture war have involved abortion and homosexual rights. There are related but less salient conflicts over pornography, divorce law, and sex education. Strange as it may seem, all of these matters, in one way or another,

involve sexuality.

Why is that the case? It all comes down to the traditional family and the “progressive” or left-wing campaign to fundamentally change society. As Kreeft explains:



“The most powerful means to destroy society is to destroy its one absolutely fundamental building block, namely the family.”

The best way to destroy the family is by destroying its foundation, stable marriage. And the best way to destroy stable marriage is, Kreeft notes, “by loosening its glue: sexual fidelity.”

Commitment to sexual fidelity is destroyed by characterizing traditional Christian sexual morality as repressive

or confining. The Sexual Revolution of the last few decades has been a campaign to “liberate” people from their obligation to sexual fidelity.

Thus the central element of the culture war is a conflict over society’s ethical norms for sexuality – recognizing that is the key to understanding the ongoing culture war.

CULTURE WAR IS A RELIGIOUS WAR

In the West our traditional norms have often been rooted in Christianity. The norms of the so-called progressive Left are religiously based too, though some will undoubtedly dispute it. But it is religious in the sense that it a belief system through which they understand the world around them and

everything in it. It is in this sense, Kreeft argues, that “sex is the effective religion of our culture”

It is this all-encompassing religious basis of the progressive sexual norm that explains its enthusiasm for the murder of unborn children. As Kreeft puts it, the progressives:

“don’t defend murder, except murder in the name of sex.... Abortion is backup birth control, of course, and birth control means the demand to have sex without having babies.”

This is a key point to remember, especially with the current high-profile controversy over pro-life laws in some American states. The progressives, Kreeft writes,

“are now even willing to murder to defend their so-called sexual freedoms. And to murder the most innocent among them, the *only* innocent among them. And the most tiny and weak and defenseless of all. And in the teeth of nature’s strongest instinct: motherhood!”

Of course, humanity’s weakness for sexual temptation has always been a problem and it has led to a multitude of sins over the centuries. It’s not like the Sexual Revolution initiated rampant sexual immorality for the first time: Sodom and Gomorrah were perverse millennia ago.

But something has changed in the last few decades. Until relatively recently, sex outside of the confines of traditional marriage was considered to be immoral, even by those who participated in it. Today, engaging in sexual behaviors that were deemed abominable just a few decades ago are considered to be very respectable, even something to celebrate with parades.

THE ENEMY

In order to properly fight the culture war, it is vital to recognize the enemy. Kreeft identifies two.

1. “Our enemies are demons. Fallen angels. Evil spirits.” We are in a spiritual war, so naturally we have spiritual adversaries. As Ephesians 6:12 puts it, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (ESV).
2. The second enemy is even worse, and that is sin. It is our own depraved tendency towards evil that must be fought most of all. The greatest enemy lies within each one of us.

From this fact Kreeft explains that if,

“...sin is the enemy, then the Savior from sin is the answer, and He is infinitely more powerful than his enemy. The weapon that will win this war – this war’s atomic bomb – is saints.”

In other words, the key weapon consists of Christians who will commit themselves to live truly holy lives in obedient service to God.

SAINTS

Our normal tendency as individuals is to see the political problems we face as somebody else’s fault. The other guy needs to change. He needs to correct his bad behavior and live right. But that’s the wrong way to think about it. We each need to focus on our own sinfulness, not somebody else’s. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can become the people God can use to bring victory for His cause.

As Kreeft explains:

“Can you imagine what ten more Mother Teresas would do for this world? Or ten more John Wesleys? No, you can’t imagine it, any more than anyone could imagine how twelve nice Jewish boys could conquer the Roman Empire. You can’t imagine it. But you can do it. You can become a saint.”

Kreeft uses the word “saint” to describe a Christian who is fully committed to living a holy life in service to God. This is how he explains what is necessary to be a saint in his terms:

“Give Christ one hundred percent of your heart and life one hundred percent of the time, holding nothing back, absolutely nothing at all, anywhere, ever. This means martyrdom – and for most of us, a more extended and difficult martyrdom than that of the noose or execution block. It means the martyrdom of dying daily, dying every minute for as long as you live, dying to all your desires and plans, including your pet plans about how to become a saint.”


The best way to fight the culture war, in other words, is for every Christian to be the very best Christian he or she could be. Victory will not be found in certain political parties or laws that get passed. Those kinds of things may be necessary at various times, but the focus must be on how we can live holier lives, not on how we can get something else to change.



The culture war is essentially a conflict over sexual morality that began with the Sexual Revolution of the late 1960s.

CONCLUSION

The culture war is essentially a conflict over sexual morality that began with the Sexual Revolution of the late 1960s. Left-wing forces have sought to fundamentally transform Western society by undermining the monogamous, heterosexual family. Liberating people from the strict confines of traditional Christian morality requires legalized abortion on demand and same-sex marriage, with all that they entail.

Peter Kreeft explains that the best way to fight the culture war is for every Christian to be the best Christian they can be, by the power of the Holy Spirit. There are no special political strategies that can bring victory, just old-fashioned holy living and service to God. That’s not to say that political and social activism are of no value. Rather, it’s that our first priority must be on dealing with the sin in our own lives. Good things will flow from that. 

The Pope Who Hated Black Cats

*Pope Gregory killed cats.
Cats kill rats.
Rats carried killer plague.
Uh oh?*

by James Dykstra



People like or dislike different kinds of animals. I'm a bird person. They fascinate me. Others are cat people. And historically, we know that some civilizations, like the ancient Egyptians, have been fascinated by cats. Others, too, have had a fascination with the animal. Pope Gregory IX was one of them, though he really wasn't a fan. And some would say that his hatred of cats may have caused the deaths of millions.

THEN THINGS GOT A BIT WEIRD...

Ugolini di Conti was born in Italy somewhere between 1145 and 1170. After an education in Paris and Bologna, he joined the church, being made a cardinal by his cousin, Pope Innocent III. In 1227, he became Pope, adopting the name of Gregory IX and that is when things became a little bit weird.

In June of 1233, Gregory issued a papal decree or bull, called *Vox in Rama*. Among those working for Gregory was an inquisitor named Conrad of Marburg. Busy in the German territories, this man's job was to root out heresy and punish heretics. He claimed to have found an odd form of Satanic ritual which involved, in part, the kissing of a black cat's buttocks, and acknowledging

him as their satanic master.

The pope took this association between cats and the devil entirely seriously and issued his bull. It resulted in the killing and torturing of cats across Western Europe. For example, in Denmark the pre-Lent festival of Fastelavn saw a black cat put into a barrel and beaten to death to ward off evil. The Kattenstoet festival in Ypres, Belgium, may have found its origin in this time. The festival involved the throwing of live cats from the belfry of the Cloth Hall in a possible attempt to expel the evil spirits the cats represented. This cat throwing festival has been revived in modern times, though now a jester throws out toy stuffed cats to waiting children below.

Here the story, as it's usually told, becomes an example of the law of unintended consequences. As Europeans feared and killed cats, rat populations thrived or so the story goes. And carried on the backs of rats were fleas that carried the Black Death or bubonic plague. In other words, Pope Gregory's attack on cats was indirectly responsible for the deaths of up to 50 million people across Europe because there were no cats to kill the rats who carried the plague.

TOO NEAT, TOO TIDY

It's a neat little story, and one that we're all tempted to believe. After all, people in the Middle Ages were silly, and modern people like us are far, far smarter. We understand more clearly what they couldn't possibly have comprehended. And, of course, since religion isn't very popular today, anything that makes religious believers look dumb is eagerly lapped up.

But history is never quite that simple. Though Pope Gregory put a target on the backs of cats in the 1230s, it's not clear how many cats were killed nor how long the anti-cat hatred lasted. As well, it wasn't until the 1340s that the Black Death started to make the rounds of Europe. Were they still killing a significant number of cats a hundred years later?

And even if cats were still actively hated, you have to remember that while cats don't quite breed like rabbits, they can multiply quickly. Unchecked a cat will breed two or three times per year, with from 1 to 8 kittens per litter. In her lifetime, a cat can give birth to up to 100 kittens. And, of course, those kittens, at five months old, can give birth to more kittens. So, according to the Roice-Hurst

...the next time you hear something that confirms or even denies what you believe in a way that's too good, too simple to be true, dig deeper.

Humane Society website, over seven years a cat and all her kittens and all their kittens and all their kittens can total up anywhere from 100 to 400 new cats.


As well, bubonic plague made a reappearance every few generations for the next few hundred years, killing as many as 100,000 people in London from 1665-1666. The plague doesn't seem to have been affected by how fashionable or unfashionable cats were at any given time.

And while the fleas on rats were one of the ways bubonic plague can be spread, it certainly wasn't the only way. The fleas that carry the disease can live on dogs, humans, and, yes, even cats. So, ironically, if cats had killed all the rats, the cats themselves may have spread the plague. And if there had been no cats and thus the rats had proliferated, the rats probably would've done the work.

SOLOMON SAYS...

So did Pope Gregory, the most powerful religious leader in Europe in his day, cause the Black Death by encouraging the destruction of cats? To let the cat out of the bag, no, he probably didn't. And the story of him causing the Black Death should warn us that when a story seems too neat, and too simple, it just might not be true.

That applies to stories we hear from our news sources, social media, and even our friends. After all, as Solomon said, the one who states his case first seems right until another comes and examines him (Prov 18:17). Find out what the other side of the issue is. If the story makes us seem absolutely right – or absolutely wrong – we might not be getting the whole story.

So the next time you hear something that confirms or even denies what you believe in a way that's too good, too simple to be true, dig deeper. Investigate. Learn more. Be curious. After all, it's not like curiosity killed the cat, is it? 

James Dykstra is a sometimes history teacher, author, and podcaster. This article is taken from an episode of his History.icu podcast, "where history is never boring." Find it at History.icu, or on Spotify, Google podcasts, or wherever you find your podcasts.



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. invites applications for the following positions:

Teachers

Full-Time, Part-Time, 12-month or 6-month appointments considered

At JCS, our vision is to be a *strongly connected* community of learners, *deeply committed* to our faith and to continual growth, nurturing individuals to be their best in the service of God and to His glory.

We are looking to add enthusiastic, committed teachers to our team for the 2022/23 school years. Due to growing class sizes we need additional, suitably qualified, teachers. Applications for full-time and part-time employment welcome, with 6-month or 12-month appointments considered.

John Calvin School currently has over 120 students from Kinder to Grade 10 with an average combined class size of 19. We are a well-resourced school, located in Launceston, a beautiful city in the north of Tasmania, a breathtaking part of God's creation. (<https://www.discovertasmania.com.au/>)

Applicants must be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches, be able to be registered to teach in Tasmania and be registered to work with vulnerable people.

Conditions and salary are based on the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020.

Expressions of interest for future positions, full-time or part-time, are welcome.

For application forms, see the school website (www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment).

Forward completed applications to the Business Manager:

- E-mail: wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Address: PO Box 89, Launceston 7250, Tasmania, Australia.

For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

- E-mail: cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au

YOU HAVE TO BE THERE

Parents, you are your child's best protection from online horrors

by Jonathon Van Maren

"You cannot raise your children as your parents raised you, because your parents raised you for a world that no longer exists." – Author unknown

I was born in 1988, and my generation straddled a lot of things. As kids we listened to cassette tapes and videos were on VHS – a video camera was roughly the size of an over-the-shoulder Hollywood contraption. The pace of technological change was so swift everything seemed to go defunct in just a few years, from the Walkman to the Discman to the iPod in a blink, while Blockbuster went big and bust in just a few years, with corner stores and gas stations investing in videos and then DVDs just in time to see their investments become obsolete as the digital world swallowed everything.

And at the backs of many of the scuzzier corner stories were little rooms usually covered by ratty curtains where furtive people would duck to pick their pornos, from big-bellied greasy truckers who didn't care who saw them to sneakier folks with a worried eye out for parents, spouses or neighbors. An aura of shame and moral grossness hung about the whole thing, and those heading back there seemed to know it.

But besides that, everything seemed largely contained, and it was. Our parents could let us head outdoors without worrying too much. Some kids got their hands on porn magazines and hid them; many got caught; but the digital deluge had not yet begun, and it was easier to assume that children could roam free without risking their innocence.

Then, in 2006, came the iPhone. Everything changed.



INSTANT ACCESS TO THE PITS OF HELL

Suddenly, pornography became next to impossible to contain. A generation of Christian kids grew up looking at porn on devices that their parents had not had as children, and had not considered a source of risk. Parents didn't know their kids' phones or iPads or most any other device could connect to some shop's free Wi-Fi, allowing them to scour the Internet's filthy caverns. Curiosity, temptation, mistake – it didn't (and doesn't) take much to get hooked, and pornography swept the culture and the churches like a tsunami. In 2016, on the sites owned by a single porn company, the number of hours of pornography watched, once tallied up, amounted 524,641 years – or roughly twelve porn

videos for every man, woman, and child on planet earth.

I've been speaking on pornography in Reformed communities and elsewhere for over ten years, and I can confirm – and I'm sure you'll agree – that the consequences have been catastrophic. Our children now grow up entirely surrounded by devices that act as portals to the demonic. I could tell scores of stories about children from Reformed homes who got addicted to porn simply by clicking a pop-up that flashed across the screen while playing an innocent game.

THIS ISN'T HOW WE GREW UP

The digitization of our society has resulted in a world actively hostile to the innocence of children, and there is no simple solution – no book,

filter, conference, or course that will protect them. As Dawn Hawkins of the National Center on Combatting Sexual Exploitation has said, **we can no longer trust that our children will not see pornography – even with our best efforts.** We must prepare their minds for when, inevitably in this culture, they do see it. That means that **only cultivating powerful personal relationships with our kids will do.**

The uncomfortable truth is that parenting in the digital age is different than parenting in previous generations. The fundamentals remain the same, as do our vows at baptism. But never in recorded human history have children had such widespread access to the most depraved sexual fantasies the human imagination can produce – *never*.

I often hear people dismiss or downplay the dangers of the digital age by noting that there is nothing new under the sun. This is true insofar as sexual sin has been existed since the Fall. But it is *not* true that any previous generation has been so thoroughly poisoned and so many lives destroyed, with the average age a child is first exposed to hardcore porn dropping year over year (it now sits around age 8 or 9). It is true that porn has always existed, but the things kids are exposed to now are nothing like the crass etchings on the walls of Pompeii, and it is a false comfort to suggest that they are. Children today have access to things their parents couldn't purchase and their grandparents couldn't imagine. *Our* children do.

Not so long ago, parents could send their kids outdoors to play without worrying about what devices the neighborhood kids might have and what they might show their friends at the park (I've heard plenty of stories of kids getting exposed to porn the first time this way). Although the culture has long since stopped inculcating Christian values – when my mom went to public school, they still opened the day with the Lord's Prayer – it was not yet hostile, and it was not yet permeated with pornography the way it is now. With comparatively little effort, the innocence of children could be protected.

Today's mainstream entertainment is packed with blasphemy and filth. Children's entertainment features LGBT content as a matter of course. Within the span of a single lifetime, TV shows have gone from *Leave it to Beaver* to having a post-sex change transgender beaver on *Blue's Clues* with chest scars from her double-mastectomy – and this is a show *for children*.

The world our parents raised us in is dead and gone. It is important to recognize this. Let me put it as bluntly as I can. The forces of evil have broken loose, and they are no longer contained to video rental stores, or corner store magazine racks, or even computer screens. It is in your house, on all of your devices, including the one you carry everywhere in your pocket. The Devil is up close and personal now, so close you can feel his breath. He wants to destroy our marriages, our families, and our communities – and his digital dragnets are doing a horrifyingly magnificent job.

WHO WILL BE THERE FOR YOUR CHILD?

There is no easy fix to this problem. Parents in the digital age must face the fact that the only way to protect our children is for us *to spend an enormous amount of time with them*. Not just quality time – *quantity* time.

Parents must ensure that their influence counterbalances the many influences that will be fighting for their children's time. The gravitational pull of parent-child relationship must be stronger than the gravitational pull of Pornhub, secular entertainment, and the temptations clamoring for their attention. In the digital age – also sometimes referred to as the information age – we have a choice: the Internet-driven culture will shape our children, or we will.

AS PREVENTION FAILS, PARENTS' PRESENCE IS CRUCIAL

Over the past ten years speaking on pornography and related cultural issues in Reformed communities, I have seen porn use among the young go from a problem to the norm. The same is true for sexting. The views of many of our

children on LGBT issues are also shifting radically as they are exposed to LGBT social media and YouTube influencers with millions of young fans.


As the Internet opens up countless new worlds for the young, old certainties that were once taken for granted are up for grabs, and our children will be exposed to every imaginable poison. It will not

”
*We will have to commit ourselves to being **present** in a way that few other generations needed to.*

be enough to merely attempt prevention (and if we do, it is likely to fail.) We will have to commit ourselves to being *present* in a way that few other generations needed to.

This will mean prioritizing family interests over business interests. It may mean making less money in order to spend more time with the kids. It will certainly mean carving out large amounts of time when you are simply available to talk to your kids about all of these issues, and to begin these conversations. Be assured, the culture is starting these conversations with missionary zeal, and they are winning converts.

In response, we will need to equip ourselves to talk to our children about all of these issues – and form relationships with them that will give us the space to have these conversations. In many, if not most cases, it will be a difficult task.

We will shape our children, or the culture will. 

*Jonathon Van Maren blogs at
TheBridgehead.ca.*



20 SCRIPTURES TO GUIDE OUR ONLINE SPEECH

May God give us the humility to recognize how our online speech may be out of step with his calling on our lives

by Chris Martin

Scripture has a lot to say about how we wield our speech, and those passages are all the more important now that technological advances have greatly multiplied our ways and means of speech. So no, there is no proverb specifically about how to tweet, and we aren't usually dictating our Facebook posts with our voice, but what we post on these social media platforms does fall under the umbrella of Scripture's guidance on speech as much as words we literally utter with our mouths.

Below are 20 passages of Scripture to guide our online speech. Let's consider them as we engage with other image-bearers online:

IS IT TRUE?

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.

- *Proverbs 12:22*

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

- *Psalms 34:13*

DO YOU NEED TO SAY IT?

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

- *Ephesians 4:29*

Those who guard their lips preserve their lives,

but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.

- *Proverbs 13:3*

Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

- *Proverbs 10:19*

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.

- *Matthew 12:36*

IS IT HELPFUL?

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

- *Colossians 4:5-6*

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

- *Proverbs 16:24*

IS IT QUARRELSOME?

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

- *1 Peter 3:9*

It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

- *Proverbs 20:3*

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

- *James 1:19*

With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors,
but through knowledge the righteous escape.
- Proverbs 11:9

The lips of fools bring them strife,
and their mouths invite a beating.
- Proverbs 18:6

Blessings crown the head of the righteous,
but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.
- Proverbs 10:6

WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT YOUR HEART?

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.
- Luke 6:45

Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious,
but fools are consumed by their own lips.
- Ecclesiastes 10:12

The soothing tongue is a tree of life,
but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.
- Proverbs 15:4

DOES IT PRAISE GOD?

Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.
- James 3:10

My mouth is filled with your praise,
declaring your splendor all day long.
- Psalm 71:8

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart

be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.
- Psalm 19:14

May God bless you today. And may He graciously give us the humility to hold our digital tongues unless we intend to build up others or point others to his goodness. **RP**

A version of this article appeared in Chris Martin's "Terms of Service" newsletter and is reprinted here with permission. "Terms of Service" looks at the social internet from a Christian perspective, and you can sign up at www.termsofservice.social.

"Terms of Service" is also the title of his newly released book, which can be found at most any online bookseller.

APOLOGETICS from anywhere with Answers to **G**



C.S. LEWIS: THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT

BIOGRAPHICAL
DRAMA
93 MINUTES / 2021
RATING: 9/10



This is the story of Lewis's conversion from ardent atheist to "the most reluctant convert," bowing his knee to God not because he wanted to, but because he couldn't do otherwise.

It's also a story superbly told. There are three different actors playing Lewis, one as a boy, another as Lewis in his twenties, and the third, portrayed by Max McLean, as Lewis in his fifties. McLean's Lewis, the Christian Lewis, is actually the film's narrator, "breaking the fourth wall" by talking directly to the audience and explaining the thoughts being thunk by the other younger still-kicking-against-the-goats Lewises (Lewis fans will quickly notice that the dialogue is taken almost entirely from his books). It's all shot on location, so we're able to walk along with the older Lewis through the halls of Oxford as he takes us, for example, to a pivotal discussion his younger self is about to have with J.R.R. Tolkien.

But what makes this a truly amazing film is that the excellent acting, writing and craftsmanship are put in service to the more excellent work God did in Lewis's heart. God took a man determined to run from Him, and transformed this rebel into the foremost Christian apologist of the twentieth century. Amazing!

- JON DYKSTRA

TRUTH & LIES IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

DOCUMENTARY
2022 / 69 MINUTES
RATING: 7/10



Truth & Lies begins with each interviewee offering up a different critique of what's going wrong in US public schools:

- The teaching of Critical Race Theory, and socialism
- Pornographic sex-ed, introduced as young as kindergarten
- Teachers working behind parents' backs
- A lowering of standards and expectations for students
- A loss of any Judeo-Christian underpinnings

What can be done? The film's two answers amount to taking over the public schools or getting out via homeschooling and private schools. That'll be expensive but as educational author Alex Newman notes, it is vital.

"This is *the* battle that is going to affect all the other battles. We're all involved in different things: protecting gun rights, lower taxes, saving babies from abortion, all these things, and they're all very worthy battles. They need to be fought. But the thread that runs through them all is education, because if we lose on the education front, we're going to lose on every front."

While this is an American film, Canadians will also benefit – the particulars might differ but the same educational philosophies are at play on both sides of the border. One caution: there is some PG material here, particularly when they talk about sex-ed curriculum. Buy or rent it at TruthandLiesfilm.us.

- JON DYKSTRA

AMERICAN GOSPEL: CHRIST CRUCIFIED

DOCUMENTARY
2019 / 176 MINUTES
RATING: 9/10



In the early 1600's, our forefathers assembled at Dordrecht to clearly correct the errors of the Remonstrants, publishing the *Canons of Dort* in a confession that has proved of great value to the Lord's people ever since.

Today Satan still loves to mislead and harass the Church so can we correct current errors effectively through our more modern means of podcasts, websites, and films? Transition Studios is trying to do so by producing a series of documentaries. *American Gospel: Christ Crucified* is their second installment, and focuses on postmodern and progressive theologians and teachers who have led millions astray.

This three-hour episode features long interviews with Bart Campolo (son of evangelist Tony Campolo), and Tony Jones (author of *A Better Atonement*), and briefer quotes from *The Shack* author William Paul Young and Todd White, among others. These men all use human logic to attack doctrines they find troubling, such as the atoning work of Christ. Campolo in particular lashes out at the idea of a wrathful God whose justice requires the punishment of sin: "I'm not interested in serving a God like that. That's not a God worthy of my worship. I'm just not interested." Another traditional view that these teachers believe needs to be changed is that homosexuality is a sin. Speaking of gay marriage, Tony Jones states that "the Bible's wrong about this one. The message of the church has evolved." Even the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is cast into doubt as the false teachers go further and further astray from the Gospel.

To combat these progressive teachers and their errors, producer Brandon

FREE AND FANTASTIC

Kimber interviews an impressive assemblage of teachers and ministers from the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions, including Voddie Baucham, Alistair Begg, Kevin DeYoung, Michael Horton, John MacArthur, and John Piper, as well as other teachers from the broader Christian community.

These theologians lean on the Bible, patiently explaining what could be complex doctrine using simple terms. Time after time, they quote God's Word to correct the logic of men railing against clear and simple teaching.

Ultimately, these false teachers do not want to believe what the Bible clearly teaches. Bart Campolo in the end reveals that he is now an atheist: he just could not believe that the God of the Bible is real. What starts as a questioning of some parts of God's Word, and an attempt to harmonize with modern views and human logic, inevitably leads to doubt about all of Scripture.

The question remains: what is the most effective way to combat heresy? Can movies and podcasts proclaiming truth be as effective as written creeds and confessions? Alistair Begg wisely summarizes one possible answer: "The Bible is so helpful to us. If we would just read it!" In the 21st century, all of us have access to the Word of God right at our fingertips at all times. We would do well to lean on it for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

In addition to the Bible, we in the Reformed churches have our precious confessions that have dealt with almost all of these issues before! We can easily recognize the lie when we are confident of and familiar with the truth. I consider this film another encouragement for Christians to read our Bibles regularly, and to not neglect the great gift we have been given in our trustworthy confessions.

American Gospel: Christ Crucified is available on various streaming services, and directly from Transition Studios at AmericanGospel.com where you can also download a free 100+ pages study guide. Highly recommended!

- MARTY VANDRIEL

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

DOCUMENTARY

2018 / 92 MINUTES **RATING: 9/10**

All of us at times have wondered what it would be like if God spoke to us directly, as He did to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. In *The God Who Speaks*, dozens of theologians and pastors make the compelling case that God has indeed spoken to us, through the Scriptures, and that the Word of God has ample compelling evidence to its validity and historicity.

Contributors include Alistair Begg, R.C. Sproul, Albert Mohler, and Kevin DeYoung. These learned theologians make the point that God has revealed Himself through His creative power in the wonder of the natural world, but has given a more clear narrative of who He is and His plan for us through the inspired Scriptures. Frank Turek states:

"You can get some of those facts from nature, but you can't get all of them: you can't get that God is triune, you can't get the plan of salvation from the stars. You can only get it from special revelation. So if we're going to be saved and sanctified, we need the Bible."

Christians will enjoy this: it equips us with talking points to defend the validity of the Bible with compelling evidence. However, the target audience seems to be people with at least some understanding of theological terms and familiarity with the Bible as a whole, which makes it less of an ideal tool for evangelism. Watch it for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.

- MARTY VANDRIEL

THE PRIVILEGED PLANET

DOCUMENTARY

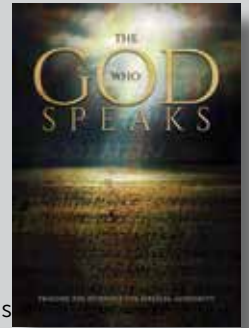
60 MINUTES, 2005 **RATING: 8/10**

If Earth was a different size, or in a different location, or if the moon's orbit shifted ever so slightly, then many of the most important scientific discoveries we've made about space could never have happened. For example, it is because our moon is 400 times closer to us than the Sun, but also 400 times smaller than the Sun, that allow us to study the outer corona of Sol during solar eclipses. And did you know that our large moon - one quarter the size of the Earth - helps stabilize the tilt of our orbit, giving us our seasons? We are the right distance from the right kind of Sun, with just the right type of internal liquid iron core to generate a magnetic field to protect us from the Sun's most harmful rays. The point is, Earth has been designed for life, and it has also been equipped for that life to discover what's going on in the Solar System around us.

Like many an "Intelligent Designer" presentation, it's a shame this doesn't specifically credit our Triune God, but Christians viewers will know Who to praise.

Stunning graphics accompany a strong argument, and it sure doesn't hurt that John Rhys-Davies (Gimli, in *Lord of the Rings*) narrates. You can watch it for free - divided into 12 chapters - at ReformedPerspective.ca/Privileged.

- JON DYKSTRA



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

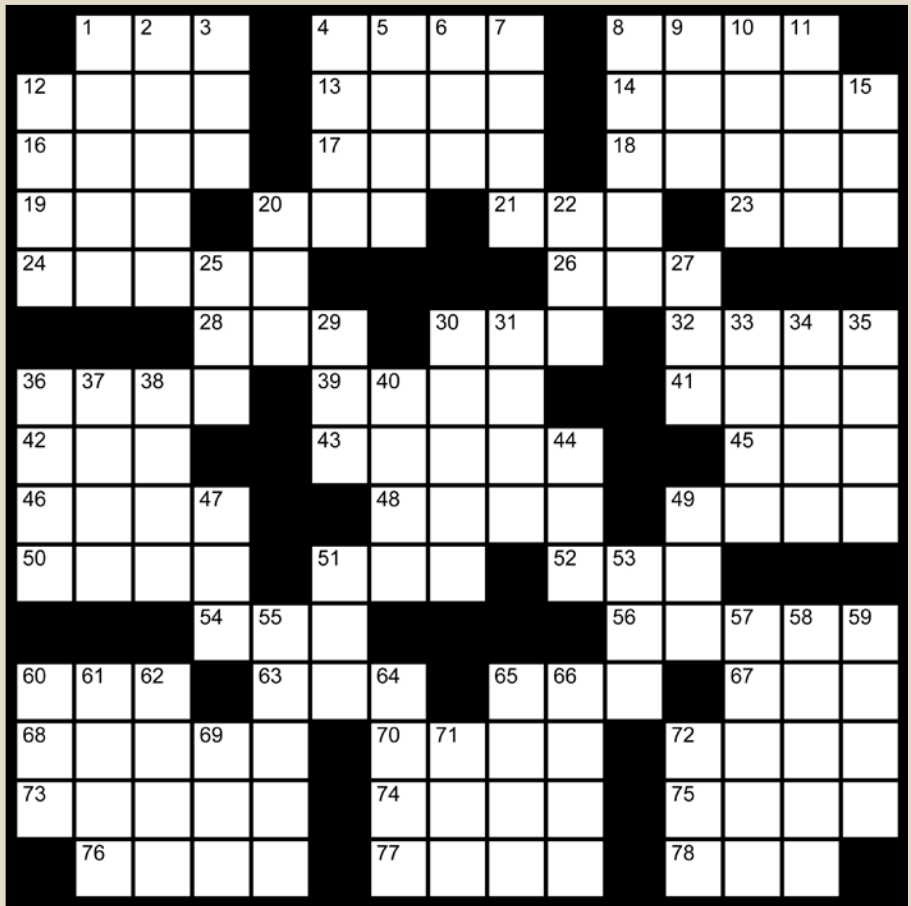
7-4

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. ___ 66 (abbr.)
4. Deep pile carpet
8. Wild pig that sounds dull
12. Homophone of 38 Down
13. O, a hula dance might partly be found here.
14. This adjective is for the birds.
16. "offered a sacrifice for the ____" (Acts 7)
17. "who will prove me a ____?" (Job 24)
18. Family of African languages
19. "O Sole ____" (Neapolitan love song)
20. Single frame of animated film
21. Sport-____: partially utile in part of Utah?
23. "And when the ___ heard it," (Mark 10)
24. "____ Passes" (poem by Robert Browning)
26. "nourisher of your ___ age" (Ruth 4)
28. ___land – a really angry country?
30. "___ bread with him in his house." (Job 42)
32. Assistant (who gives Olde English help?)
36. "...and casting himself ____" (Ezra 10)
39. Shell we put our Mexican food in this?
41. "drew near to the ____" (Judg. 9)
42. Barely make (out a living)
43. The annoyed person saying 30 Down
45. 2000 pounds – That's not backwards!
46. Ingredient in muffins and cereal
48. Oahu ladies have this dance.
49. "will come in the ____ way" (Acts 1)
50. Traditional garment of south Asian women
51. Vim; vigour; ingredient for a rip-roaring rally
52. Oddly enough, a ___ doesn't ___ - too quiet.
54. Stan ___ or General ___ or "Annabel ___"
56. Instruments used by Davidic temple singers
60. "the best ___ of the time" (Eph. 5)
63. "Go to the ____, O sluggard;" (Prov. 6)
65. Coastal state bordering Ala. and Ga.
67. Fleet but flightless bird
68. One who is chosen by God in Jesus Christ
70. Solo vocal piece (found in area of opera?)
72. Dog breed (in short) you could see in labs?
73. "with this... the prophets ____" (Acts 15)
74. Where the hay or downtown dwellers
75. "its young ____ cry to God for help"



- (Job 38)
20. Motor vehicle
22. "big ___ of his right foot" (Lev. 14)
25. "Let's put a ___ in it." (quote from Bolt)
27. Mom's mate
29. When the plane might arrive (abbr.)
30. "Don't ___ while we practice our lines."
31. Lacking tact? Well, that's not too sharp!
33. Very small amount: It's all Greek to me.
34. This will bring a backward mood.
35. Sea eagle (sounds like it can earn its way)
36. These girls come out (short) at the cotillion.
37. Edible flowering plant
38. "the day began to ____ away" (Luke 9)
40. "and make the heart ____" (Lev. 26)
44. A "verray" narrow beam of light
47. Nothing; zip; zilch; zero
49. "stormy... for the ___ is red" (Matt. 16)
51. "write with ___ and ink." (3 John 1)
53. ___ mode: apple pie serving suggestion
55. "have ____ the fruit of lies." (Hos. 10)
57. Girl's name (variation of Rhiannon)
58. Remnant of a dying fire
59. Figure (out); determine what's going on
60. Over half the NHL's teams are found here.
61. Epic multi-generational story
62. Same place & sounds the same as 28 Across
64. "Don't just ____ the ____; walk the walk."
65. "The thane of ____ had a wife" (*Macbeth*)
66. "Better ____ than never."
69. Prefix meaning modern or new
71. ____'s *Gone Wrong*: 2021 sci-fi kids' comedy
72. A ship's record, or something used to build a cabin

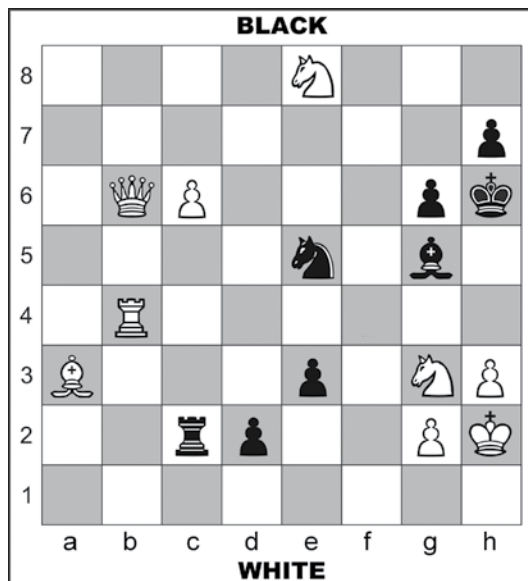
DOWN

1. Half-diameters
2. Rhymes with group; is a *group*
3. Electric fish
4. Non-electric fish – the *only* one?
5. The seventh plague (Ex. 9)
6. Exclamation mocking Jesus (Mark 15)
7. Supposed expert, mostly in spiritual matters
8. Where the babble started (Gen. 10-11)
9. Eggs (found in ovaries)
10. Aren't using bad grammar?
11. Crime or interest ____
12. Coward or weakling
15. Convent-ional lady

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #269

"Again sacrifices bring success!"



WHITE TO MATE IN 3
Or, if it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK TO MATE IN 4

Riddle for Punsters

#269 - "Gas guzzlers for sale?"

Anyone who goes to Smooth-talking Wally's Car Lot and buys a used car with a V-8 engine and a sign on the car that says "All _ _ _ oline companies recommend buying this model of car" would be making a fu _ lish mistake (especially at gas prices nowadays, resulting in most people being "down in the dumps" when they are down at the _ umps).

Problem to Ponder

#269 - "Many Empty Student Desks?"

A high school (grades 9-12) has four classes, one for each grade. Each grade has four fewer students than the grade below it (so grade 12 has 4 fewer students than grade 11, and so on). One day, due to a severe rainstorm, each grade had 4 students absent, except for grade 9 which had 5 students absent. As a result, only 79 students were present at the school that day.

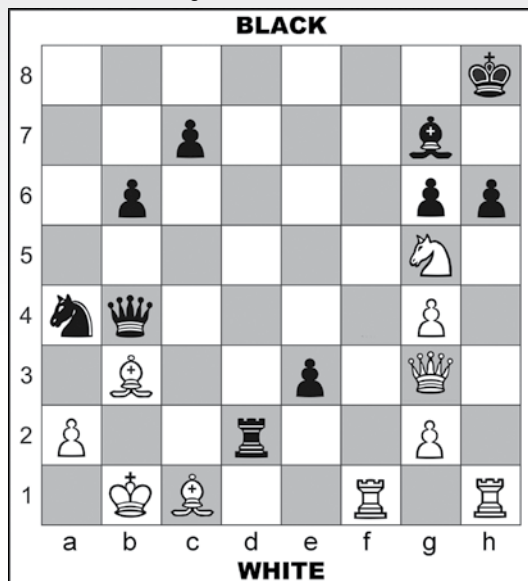
- How many students are enrolled in the grade 11 class?
- How many students are at the school on a day when 25% are home sick and 1/8 of the students are gone on a field trip?

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to
Puzzle Page, 43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or robgleach@gmail.com

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

Solution to Chess Puzzle #268

"Some sacrifices bring success!"



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation
1. RxP ch BxR
2. Q-K5 ch B-N2
3. R-R1 mate
[Not R-B8 since QxR]

Algebraic Notation
1. Rh1xh6 + Bg7xh6
2. Qg3-e5 + Bh6-g7
3. Rf1-h1 ++
[Not Rf1-f8 since Qb4xf8]

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#268 - "Did someone com-plane?"

Why did the female pilot get fired for what the airline called "weighty reasons"? It became known that she was on a **crash** diet. She is hoping to **land** a new job with a **ramp**ed up salary. Perhaps it will work out well if she catches **wind** of a theatre job, assuming they have a suitable opening and enough stage **props**.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#268 - "Does it fit ... your budget?"

Natasha has a clothing store for women who want to look fashionable without paying inflated prices so she marks up items only 40% above her wholesale cost. She sold a blue sweater on sale at 20% off the regular (marked-up) price. A lovely emerald green sweater was sold for twice the sale price of the blue sweater. The profit made selling the green sweater was \$28 more than the profit on the blue one even though Natasha paid the same wholesale cost for each sweater. At what price was the green sweater sold?

Let w represent the (same) **wholesale** cost of each sweater. The blue, sold at 20% **off** the regular price, therefore sold for 80% of

the regular price so at 80% of ($w + 40%$ of w) = $0.80(w + 0.40w) = 0.80(1.40w) = 1.12w$. Thus, the profit on the blue sweater was $1.12w - w = 0.12w$.

The green sweater was sold for double the blue sweater sale price, so for $2(1.12w) = 2.24w$. So the profit on the green sweater was $2.24w - w = 1.24w$.

Next, the profit on the green sweater was \$28 more than the profit on the blue sweater. Therefore, $1.24w = 0.12w + 28$ so $1.12w = 28$ so $w = 25$

The green sweater sold for $2.24w = 2.24(25) = 56$. Thus **the price of the green sweater was \$56**.

BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation
1. ----- QxBch
2. PxQ N-B6 ch
3. K-R1 R-R7 mate

Algebraic Notation
1. ----- Qb4xb3 +
2. a2xb3 Na4-c3 +
3. Kb1-a1 Rd2-a2 ++

IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

AGAINST A MOB MENTALITY

In a recent conversation on the *Uncommon Knowledge with Peter Robinson* podcast, PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel made this interesting observation on a crowd's wisdom:

THIEL: I think the Judeo-Christian [perspective] is always extremely skeptical. For a biblical scholar I would ask the question, is there a single incidence in which the unanimity of the crowd is right? I think it's always wrong. Joseph is right, his brothers are wrong. The Tower of Babel – everybody, the global crowd is completely wrong. Christ is abandoned...

ROBINSON: Pilate begs the crowd for Christ to be freed...

THIEL: The crowd always gets it wrong. So somehow reason tells to believe in the wisdom of the crowds, Revelation tells us to be skeptical.

Thiel argues there is good reason to question the prevailing narrative. But can we think of a time in the Bible when the crowd was right? The only example that comes to my mind is that many shouted "Hosanna" for Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Mark 11...though it was only a short time later that the crowd was shouting for Jesus' death. So, the case for skepticism remains, but it's worth noting that the crowd isn't so reliably wrong that we can just automatically go with the opposite of what they shout. It's also worth noting that God does speak to the wisdom of consulting others (Prov. 11:14, 12:15, 15:22, etc.). But with what we know about Man's rebellious heart, we shouldn't expect wisdom from the mob.

UNDENIABLE

From the start, doubts about God have been common to God's people: Adam and Eve doubted God's

trustworthiness, Sarah and Zechariah both doubted God's ability to give them a son, and Doubting Thomas got his title for being skeptical about the resurrection. Many of us will go through a season of doubt too, but as common as doubt might be, that doesn't make it right and reasonable. After all, as Christian rapper Toby Mac puts it his song below, God is *Undeniable!*

*There are moments that I doubt You.
Blind to the beauty that surrounds me,
I try to push away the need that I'm
needin' proof.
And this struggle that I have, it ain't
nothing new.
But the evidence is piling up, yup.
You change my heart - isn't that enough?
You give me life that I can't take credit for,
Call me to walk through an open door.*

*Your work doesn't stop with me.
Your signature's on everything we see,
From the hills of Negril, Jamaica,
To the kid that the doctor said would
never make it.
Which is harder to believe? That You
don't exist?
Or that You orchestrated all of this?
Living in the world that is so confusing
You're the argument I'm never losing
'Cause I believe.*

*Undeniable, You are, You are, You are.
Unmistakable, You are, You are.
You're the bright and morning star,
But still You speak to my heart.
Undeniable, You are, You are.*

THE CHURCH AND THE COMING METAVERSE...

Many of us worship in churches with limited technology: Bibles in the pews, rather than the text projected overhead, and not a fog machine to be seen. But even our churches haven't escaped the impact of technology, as Ian Harber and Patrick Miller explain in a recent article:

"Henry Ford didn't set out to create megachurches. But before the advent of the personal vehicle, most Christians seeking a church faced a simple denominational decision: do you attend the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, or Catholic church *around the corner*? With a vehicle, Christians could suddenly attend whichever church had the best children's ministry programming, youth activities, and rock 'n' roll Sunday morning worship – as long as it was within 10 to 30 minutes of driving. We became consumers because we could be consumers."

They were urging the Church to get ready for the Metaverse – the online world that Facebook is trying to create – but also noted we have some time, as it is probably years away from really coming together. But, like the car, the Internet, and the smartphone before it, this new tech will probably present us with both new opportunities, and new temptations to deal with.

SOURCE: "How to prepare for the Metaverse" posted to TheGospelCoalition.org on Nov. 2, 2021

10 TIPS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE (OR THE WORLD!) BETTER

On Jan. 1, 2000, and then again on the first day of 2022, the British paper *The Guardian*, published an article with 100 tips on "improving your life" or "making the world a better place." Out of those 200 offerings, here's a Top 10:

1. On the fence about a purchase? Wait 72 hours before you buy it.
2. Keep a book in your bag to avoid the temptation to doomscroll.
3. Nap.
4. Keep your keys in the same place.
5. Be polite to rude strangers – it's oddly thrilling.
6. Don't be weird about how to stack the dishwasher.
7. If you buy something from a charity shop, consider paying double.
8. Stop yourself saying "I."
9. Volunteer at your church or Christian school
10. Paint the outside of your house for

the pleasure of those walking past
(not just the inside for you).

SOURCE: "100 ways to slightly improve your life without really trying" posted to theguardian.com on Jan 1, 2022, and "100 ways you can make the world a better place" posted to the guardian.com on Jan 1, 2000

ENGLISH ODDITIES

In her book *Highly Irregular*, Arika Okrent shares a 140-year-old poem that deserves to be remembered today. I saw a version of it titled as: "I wrote it in my jolonel":

"There was a brave soldier, a Colonel,
Who swore in a way most infolonel;
But he never once thought
As a Christian man ought
He imperiled his own life etolonel."

SOURCE: Arika Okrent's *Highly Irregular: Why Tough, Through, and Dough Don't Rhyme and other oddities of the English Language* (H/T Douglas Wilson)

WOMEN IN COMBAT

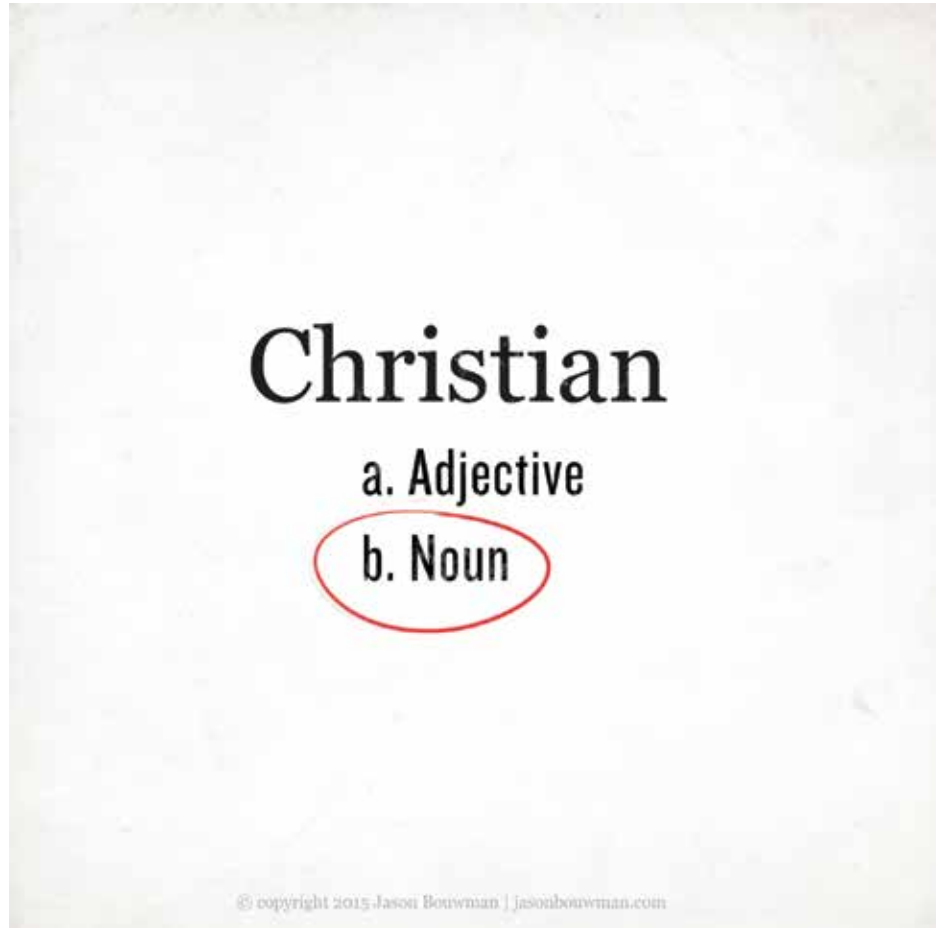
"Here's the problem: in opening combat roles to women, we send out messages to both sexes that are either untrue, offensive or both. We are telling women that they are functionally equal to men, which everyone knows is false. And we're telling men that the social goal of gender neutrality is more important than their own security, which is offensive and demoralizing."

– Barbara Kay, "The Canadian Forces' failed recruitment policy," *National Post*, Feb. 18, 2020

TREASURE GOOD TEACHERS

- "You don't live long enough to learn from experience." – Jewish proverb
- "We frequently know more, not because we have moved ahead by our own natural ability, but because we are supported by the mental strength of others, and possess riches that we have inherited from our

Rebel News, Fox News, and the National Post have all failed this test as all are using female pronouns to describe men competing in women's sports. (Cartoon used with permission – PatCrossCartoons.com).



This is an excerpt from Jason Bouwman's unique devotional, *Still Thinking*, which Canadians can buy at StillThinkingBook.com



forefathers. Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to puny dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature.” – John of Salisbury

PROV. 15:1 IN ACTION

Christian comedian Phil Callaway recently told a story about a lady who thoughtlessly questioned whether he should ever have been born. Yikes! But rather than answering in kind, Callaway took his lead from Prov. 15:1 and offered a gentle word.

“I spoke somewhere telling of my parents who were about 40 when I was born. Two ladies came up to me after. They were upset; they were clearly disagreeing. One said ‘I don’t think mothers should have children after 35. What about you?’ I said ‘I agree completely – 35 is a lot of children.’ Well, they began to laugh, and away they went focusing on what united them.”

CHEESY JOKES

- Edam is the only type of cheese that is *made* backward
- Never believe what your cheese is saying when it’s too gouda to be true!
- What did the photographer tell the Monterey Jack? “Say ‘People!’”
- What did the Mozzarella say when someone threw tomato sauce at him? “You wanna pizza me?”

NO PEGLEGS, NO PUBERTY BLOCKERS

“If kids knew what they wanted to be at age 8 the world would be filled with cowboys and princesses. I wanted to be a pirate. [Thankfully] no one took me seriously and scheduled me for eye removal and pegleg surgery.”

– Bill Maher, renown atheist, having a Rom. 2:14-15 moment

TRAIN UP YOUR KIDS IN THE INTERNET USAGE THEY SHOULD FOLLOW

“You need to put off foolishness and embrace responsibility. Today we are handing our children power tools and then acting shocked when they cut off their hands. This is absurd, and we should expect that our children will make serious mistakes if we do not guide them. So parent, you don’t need only to educate yourself, but also your children. You need to have a plan for introducing new technologies to your children and for monitoring them as they use them. **This is your responsibility – the responsibility of having a plan.**”

– Tim Challies (“Parenting well in a digital world”)



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JERRY PINKNEY: Making the classics kinder

by Jon Dykstra

In addition to the dozens of books Jerry Pinkney (1939-2021) has illustrated for others, he has also retold a number of tales from Aesop's Fables, Hans Christian Andersen, and Rudyard Kipling. While loyal to these classics, he always adds in his own spin, which is often kinder than the original.

This gentler take comes out in his illustrations too, where his use of watercolor makes his pictures bright, but soft. He loved drawing animals with people's facial quirks, and would regularly pack his pages with detail.

What follows is a summary review of his most popular picture books, almost all of which should be readily available at your local library.

RECOMMENDED

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

1997 / 48 PAGES

This is a gorgeous treatment of Rudyard Kipling's classic tale. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi is a lost mongoose taken in by an English family in India. But he's not simply a pet – mongooses are snake killers, and there are three snakes in the family garden that he has to fight, one by one. The story is scary in parts, but each fight is quickly told, which might make this a great book to introduce young readers to a bit of tension. Pinkney's watercolor paintings add enormously to the story.

The Ugly Duckling

1999 / 40 PAGES

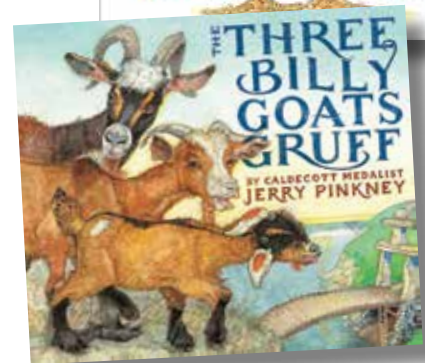
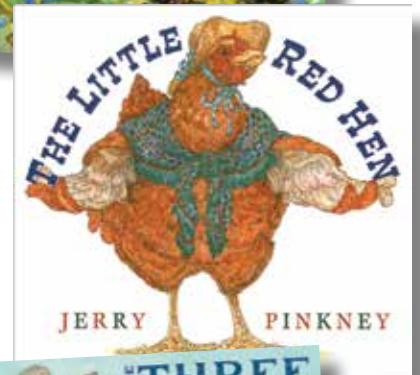
Everyone seems a little bit nicer (or maybe a little less mean) to the ugly duck-

ling in Pinkney's version, though he does still get picked on for looking so different from the other ducklings. It's only when he discovers he is a swan, not a duck, that he finds his place in the world. The moral to this story is one that parents can shape to a degree: is it about finding the right peer group – one that will accept you for who you are – or is what's important finding out who God intends you to be?

Aesop's Fables

2000 / 96 PAGES

This is a fabulous collection of more than 60 of Aesop's fables. Even if you aren't familiar with the ancient Greek author Aesop, you've certainly heard at least a few of his fables, ones like *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and *The Lion and the Mouse*. In this collection the stories are at their shortest, just half a page to maybe two, which means you can read a handful at a time to your children. There is a moral to each story, again, and while most of them are insightful and foster common sense, these are not inspired. We found some of them are disputable, or right in one situation and may be wrong in another. That makes them all the more fun to read together, because examining the moral spurs on the discussion. That might be a reason parents would want to read this one with their kids, and not simply hand it off to them. None of the morals taught are all that horrible, so it isn't a dangerous book: just a limited one, that gets some things only partly right, which means, also partly wrong.



The Little Red Hen

2006 / 32 PAGES

A red hen asks her barnyard companions if any of them will help her plant, harvest, carry, or bake her grain, and the pig, dog, rat, and goat all answer in turn, "Not I!" So, when it comes to the eating of the bread, the hen decides that they won't have any part in that either. This is a tale about justice, so it is worth reminding kids that we shouldn't be so quick to deliver justice to others, as Jesus satisfied the just judgment coming our way so that we would instead receive mercy.

While loyal to these classics, he always adds in his own spin, which is often kinder than the original

Little Red Riding Hood

2007 / 40 PAGES

I love the little details Pinkney adds: in this one, he offers a reason as to why the wolf didn't just gobble Little Red Riding Hood when he first met her in the forest – “he heard the *chop, chop* of woodcutters working nearby.” The wolf then gets ahead of Little Red by suggesting she stop to collect some kindling for a fire to warm her grandmother. Parents can point out that while this might seem a nice idea, it's actually disobeying Red's mother, who told her to head straight there with no delay. I was surprised when not only grandma, but Red herself gets swallowed up. But, of course, the woodcutter does come to the rescue.

The Lion and the Mouse

2009 / 40 PAGES

When a tiny mouse disturbs the rest of the King of the Beasts, the King seems intent on having a quick snack. But instead, after some back and forth with the tiny petitioner, the lion lets the mouse go. Why? Readers already familiar with this Aesop Tale will remember that the mouse has pledged to help the king if ever he is in trouble. But in Pinkney's almost entirely wordless version – there are only a few squeaks, one owl screech, and a lion's roar – it isn't as clear. But no worries, we can follow along well enough. Then when hunters trap the mighty lion in a net, it is the mouse that comes to the rescue, chewing through the rope to set the lion free. The moral of the story? Even the strongest will need help.

Three Little Kittens

2010 / 40 PAGES

Three little kittens lose their mittens, and consequently, lose their chance to eat their mother's pie. Pinkney has extended but only lightly altered this classic tale, and paired it with page after page of adorable kitty pictures that any child will love to look at.

The Tortoise and the Hare

2013 / 40 PAGES

In this nearly wordless retelling (just 27 in all) we get treated to a double-page spread of the hare stretched out galloping with everything he's got. In some versions of the story, the rabbit succumbs to ego and flattery, falling behind when he does stunts to impress the fans (particularly the girl fans) but Pinkney gives him a less obnoxious flaw, distracting him instead with a plump lettuce garden, where he overindulges and falls asleep. And that's when the slow but *steady* turtle can make his move. The story concludes with the hare being a good sport and celebrating the turtle's victory.

The Grasshopper & the Ants

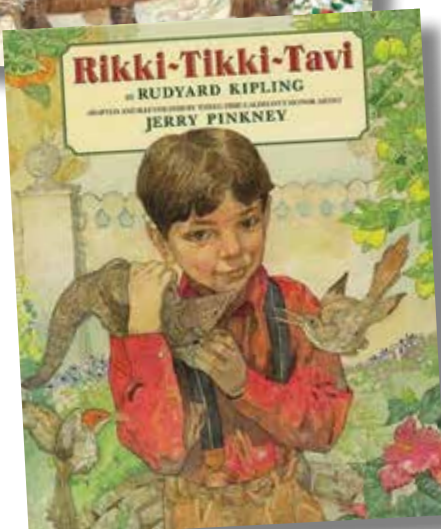
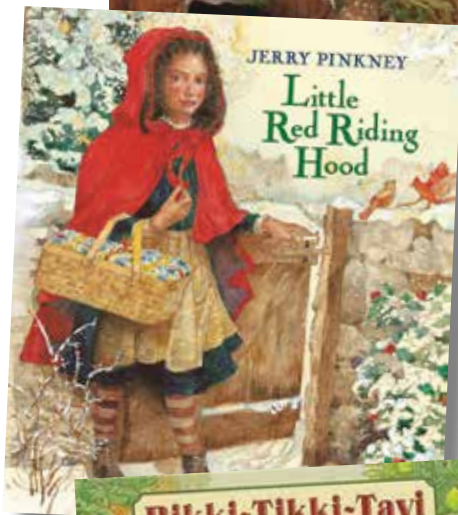
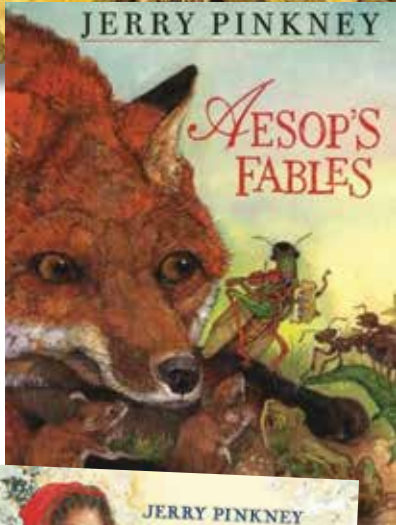
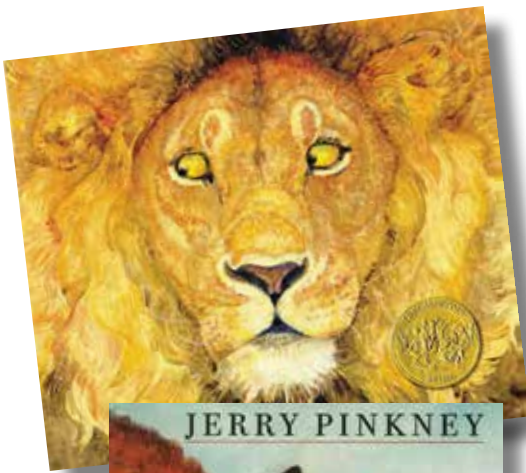
2015 / 40 PAGES

In this version the grasshopper is a one-man band, singing his encouragements to the ants to forgo their work for play. Of course, when winter comes, we see the (unstated) moral to the story play out: that we should not put off until tomorrow what we can do today. But Pinkney's ending, with the ants offering the grasshopper a place to winter, leaves us wondering if the grasshopper learned that lesson.

Three Billy Goats Gruff

2017 / 40 PAGES

This is the best version of this classic tale you will find, with wonderful artwork paired with an updated and improved version of the story. The three goats come, one by one, the smallest first, to cross a bridge to get to some delicious grassland. A troll pops up to devour the first goat, but this little one promises that his bigger, tastier brother is coming, and the troll should really wait for him. When the second comes, he says the same about his even bigger brother, and the troll lets him pass too. But when the biggest Billy Goat Gruff comes, he knocks the troll right off the bridge. That's usually the end of the story, but Pinkney has the troll land in



a river where a giant fish tries to devour him! After his narrow escape, the question is, has the troll learned his lesson? This is a story parents could maybe use to talk about bullying, but they would have to note that even though the troll got what he deserved here, that doesn't mean we have to do to others as they were going to do to us.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

Noah's Ark

2002 / 40 PAGES

I'm leery of biblical adaptations in large part because those that do them are often casual about how closely their summaries line up with what the Bible says, and the visual dimension will add details that weren't in the biblical text. However, Pinkney is quite careful, with his most notable departure the omission that in addition to the pairs of creatures two by two, seven of each clean animals were also taken (or, likely, seven pairs of each clean animal – Gen. 7:2-3)

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

2011 / 30 PAGES

A chipmunk stars in this retelling of the classic bedtime nursery rhyme, and early on he is finding "little stars" everywhere, from a dandelion fluff floating in the sky, to water droplets glistening on a spider's web. But then, suddenly, he's in a boat sailing to the moon. Clearly, he must be dreaming here, but the transition from the waking world is abrupt and I think most children (and many an adult) will be mystified as to what just happened.

DON'T BOTHER

The Little Match Girl

1999 / 32 PAGES

I have to say I've never liked the original version of this Hans Christian Andersen tale, and nothing has changed with Jerry Pinkney's update. It is well done, but such a sad tale. And while it is important for adults to know of the needy, I don't know that I have to confront my Grade 1 child with these challenging realities.

The Nightingale

2002 / 40 PAGES

An African adaptation of an odd and lesser-known Hans Christian Andersen tale. It features death as a creepy character which is why I'm content to have it remain a lesser-known tale.

Puss in Boots

2012 / 40 PAGES

A beautiful version of a less than heroic tale about a clever but deceitful cat who tricks everyone into believing his master is a Count.

The Little Mermaid

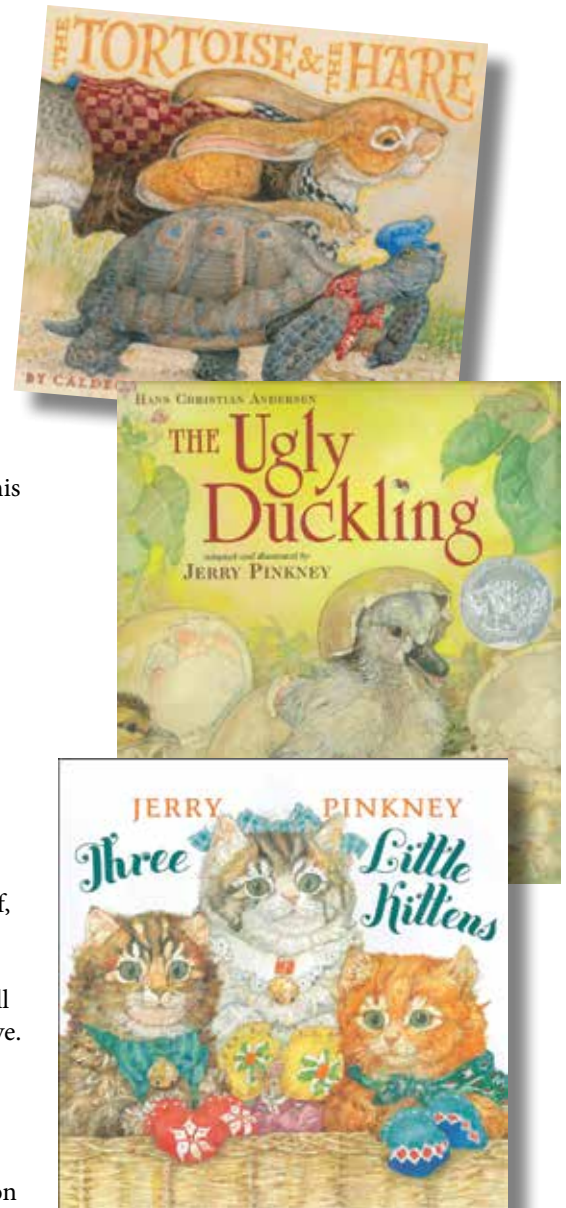
2020 / 48 PAGES

In his version, the Little Mermaid doesn't fall in love at first sight, doesn't give up her life underwater for a man who doesn't even know she exists, and doesn't trade her tail for legs that constantly feel like she's walking on blades. So, an improvement on the original? Maybe. But Pinkney's version has a witch that looks like Satan himself, all red and horned, and a tack-on "girl-power" ending with the Little Mermaid suddenly able to beat all the bad guys all by herself for reasons that remain elusive. There's no reason to get this one.


CONCLUSION

In the many articles prompted by Pinkney's passing late last year, mention was made of how this prolific author struggled with reading in his youth. It was only decades later that he discovered he had dyslexia. Pinkney credited his parents' positive outlook with enabling him to persist, and while he had struggles in one area, he found out that he was gifted in another: right from the start, he had a talent for art.

These obituaries also spoke of his advocacy for African Americans. He grew up in a tumultuous time. He was almost the same age as Emmett Till, a young black boy who was famously murdered for simply flirting with a white woman. It wasn't until Pinkney started having children himself that black children started being depicted in picture books. He's made a point of



including them frequently in his own work – for example, he has a black Red Riding Hood – though the inclusion is done naturally, without any particular note made. Even his advocacy is gentle.

What never seemed to be mentioned was anything about Pinkney's relationship with his Maker. The closest was a passing reference to his wife being a minister, which would have us suspect he was a liberal Christian. If so, his love for the old classics seems to have kept him from pushing any such liberalism in his books. He is an author that Christian parents will love to share with their little ones, particularly because he so often put a new spin on familiar fare. 

RP'S 52 IN 22 CHALLENGE: PART II

3 gents, 1 book a week, for 1 year

It's been four months now since three competitive gents started a book-reading challenge. A lawyer, a minister, and an editor – André Schutten, Jim Witteveen, and Jon Dykstra – agreed to a goal of reading 52 books in 2022. To add a little motivation, they also agreed to a small punitive measure: at year's end, anyone who didn't reach 52 would have to donate \$20 to a charity of their choosing for every book he fell short.

To show their work, they'd also write a short review of every book read, and share it on Reformed Perspective's website. Our hope was that our challenge might spur others to read too, including, perhaps, tackling some of the suggestions we listed. Space does not permit us to share all the reviews here, but you can find them all at ReformedPerspective.ca/52 as well as on RP's social media channels – MeWe, Facebook, Instagram, and Gab – under the hashtag [#RP52in22](https://twitter.com/RP52in22)

This marks the one third mark, four months in, and so far everyone is roughly on track.

THE TALLY TO DATE

The lawyer – André Schutten: **20**

The minister – Jim Witteveen: **19**

The editor – Jon Dykstra: **21**

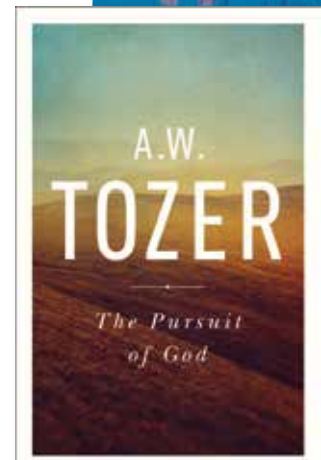
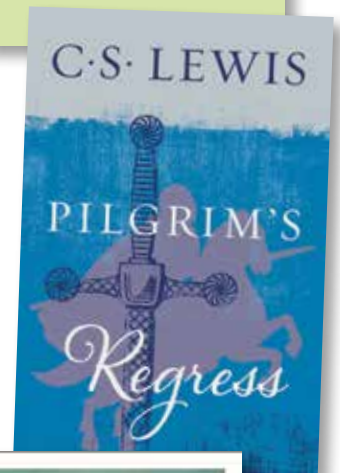
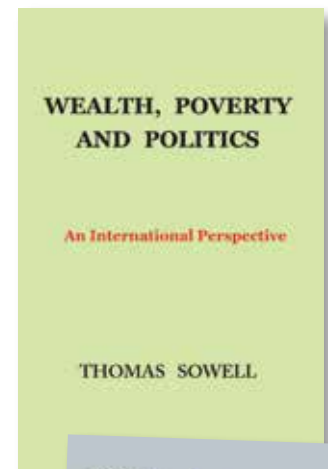
THE LAWYER – ANDRÉ SCHUTTEN

The brilliant economist Thomas Sowell's *Wealth, Poverty, and Politics: An International Perspective* (2015, 320 pages) is an excellent, well researched, readable book that makes understandable the politics surrounding issues of social justice, poverty and wealth disparity. Sowell (pronounced "soul"), grew up in Harlem, New York in a very poor, black neighborhood and thus is not writing as an elitist out of touch with the reality on the streets. Yet he pushes back against the dominant narratives about race, oppression, social justice, the welfare state, and more in this book. His use of historic and global examples make the book a fascinating read and he demonstrates just how much the civil government in the modern west is actually exacerbating the problems for disadvantaged

groups. I recommend the book for college age and up, to anyone interested in politics, social justice themes, and/or economics.

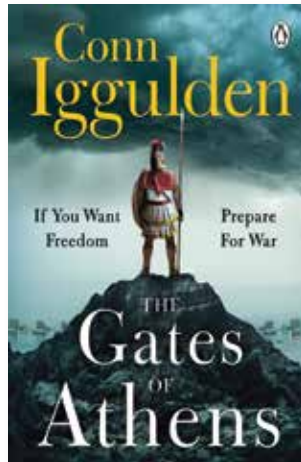
C.S. Lewis's *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933, 255 pages) is an enjoyable allegory that loosely traces Lewis' own path to conversion (though he insists in an afterword that it is not autobiographical). It tells the story of John, who is seeking an island he saw and is intensely longing to reach. In trying to reach the island, John has many adventures and runs into people like Mr. Enlightenment (their conversation made me chuckle), Mr. Mammam, Mother Kirk, and others. Most of the allegorical elements are easy enough to pick up on, with the result that Lewis packs an incredible philosophical and theological course into a thoroughly entertaining adventure. Even so, I probably missed some allegorical references. Perhaps I'll read the annotated version soon? Highly recommended!

I read A.W. Tozer's *The Pursuit of God*, (1948, 98 pages) in a single sitting on a Saturday afternoon. What an afternoon! It is short, sweet, and an incredibly powerful call to put aside comfortable Christianity and put God first, to pursue God with every part



of you, to know God as He desires to be known. It challenged me and made me squirm at times. Yet, as each chapter ends with a prayer, it called me to lay it all before the throne. While Tozer does not come from a Reformed tradition, there was nothing in this book that caused me any concerns. On the contrary, I felt the book was an excellent wake-up call to the 21st-century, North American church. This book would be great to read aloud as a small group and pray over.

Conn Iggulden is my favorite historical fiction writer. I've read three four-book series by him already and am starting a fourth one. The first book of the series is called *The Gates of Athens*, (2021, 464 pages) and tells of the battle of Marathon (where 10,000 vastly outnumbered Athenian hoplites push off the invasion of Darius'



Persian army) and of the battle of Thermopylae (the famous 300 Spartans who hold the pass against the 300,000 Persians for three days, and the less famous but equally crucial naval battle occurring at the same time). Iggulden also paints a picture of the political dance between Themistocles, Xanthippus, and other statesmen of Athens. This book was a page-turner and difficult to put down. An added benefit is that I refreshed my ancient history lessons. A fun fact not mentioned in the book: it's very likely that the Persian king Xerxes who led the invasion of Greece and saw the 300 Spartans was the same King who later married the Jewish Queen Esther. If so, on

reading this book you will get a better appreciation of just how perilous it was for Queen Esther to approach this king with her requests.

I read Wilson Rawls' novel *Where the Red Fern Grows* (1961, 289 pages) to my eight-year-old son over the course of three weeks, and we thoroughly enjoyed it. It tells the story of a very poor boy who is determined to get a pair of coon-hunting hounds, how he achieves his goal, and the adventures he has with his dogs.



While I did employ some careful censorship of the gorier details of coon hunting (for the sake of my son's maturity level), I nevertheless highly recommend the book, especially for dads to read to their eight to twelve-year-old boys. It is helpful for teaching the ethic of hard work and persistence,

and the lesson that life isn't always about happy endings, and yet being thankful for the wonderful things we have for the seasons God gives them to us. I found the references to God, Scripture, and prayer always respectful even if the theology is slightly off. Warning: If you're the emotional type, you might start crying through the second-last chapter. I had to pause a couple times to wipe away tears and swallow a persistent lump in my throat. That too, is a teaching moment.

One of the most accomplished judges in English history, Lord Tom Bingham, wrote this short but helpful book *The Rule of Law* (2010, 213 pages). Lord Bingham explains that the book "is not addressed to lawyers... It is addressed to those who have heard references to the rule of law, who are inclined to think that it sounds like a good thing rather than a bad thing, who wonder if it may not be rather important, but who are not quite sure what it is all about and would like to make up their minds." The book opens with some interesting legal history, outlines eight aspects of the rule of law (the chapter on human rights is particularly good), before closing with some modern application to the war on terror. Some post-COVID readers may be happy to apply the warnings of this book to violations of the rule of law over the last two years but may also be appropriately challenged to rethink their position on certain government actions during the "war on terror." An accessible read, I highly recommend this book for all lawyers, politicians, government workers, and any citizen who has used the term "rule of law" recently but is not 100% sure they know what the term really means.

THE MINISTER – JIM WITTEVEEN

We've been hearing a lot about Klaus Schwab and his World Economic Forum (WEF). For those of us concerned about his brand of globalism, what we've been hearing has not been reassuring. But in order to truly understand where people like Klaus Schwab really stand, we need to go to the source. In 2019, Schwab and his co-author Thierry Malleret published *Covid-19: The Great Reset*. *The Great Narrative: For a Better Future* (2022, 253 pages) builds on that foundation, with interviews with "fifty of the world's foremost global thinkers and opinion makers." "The Great Narrative," as its title suggests, presents the WEF's understanding of the state of the world, the problems that must be addressed, and the goals which the nations of the world should be working to achieve. "Narratives shape our perceptions," Schwab (or Malleret) writes, "which in turn form our realities and end up influencing



our choices and actions. They are how we find meaning in life.” The very definition of “narrative” that they provide says a great deal about what they are attempting to accomplish in this work. Our perceptions are shaped by narratives, the stories we use to explain our worldview. And, Schwab says, it is our perceptions which form our realities. Reality, given this definition, is something that we create, not an objective state of affairs to which we must adapt ourselves. Despite Schwab’s mistaken notion about the nature of reality, he is correct in understanding that narrative is vitally important, and thus he attempts to create a narrative that will lead people to accept his prescriptions for the government of international society and the lives of individuals. The WEF may not have legislative power, but its “great narrative” has become the prevailing narrative, and expressions of dissent are being marginalized and even silenced in many corners. “The Great Narrative” attacks the true narrative, the Word of God, the only place that the true meaning of

life and true wisdom can be found. We need to familiarize ourselves with works of this type only because of the influence that they have

During the presidency of Donald Trump, there was a lot of talk about the dangers of the “Deep State.” We all remember the chants of “Drain the swamp!” and promises of a grand house-cleaning that would soon take place in the U.S. government – a house-cleaning that never seemed to become a reality. Wikipedi-

dia refers to the idea that a “Deep State”

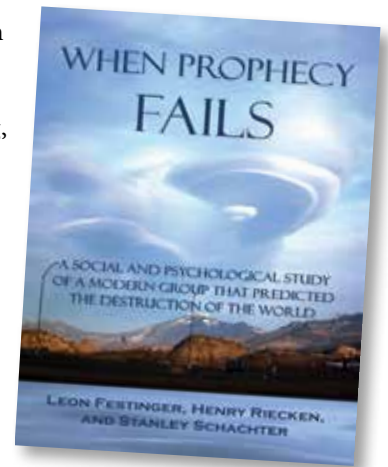
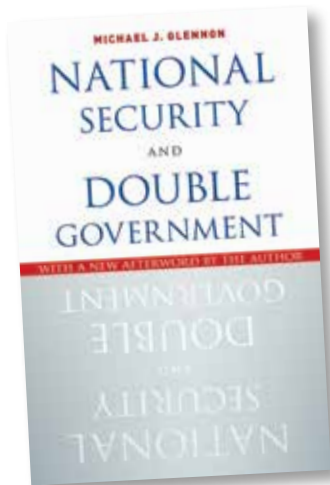
exists as a “discredited conspiracy theory,” but Michael J. Glennon’s *National Security and Double Government* (2015, 234 pages) provides plenty of evidence for its existence, and the danger it poses to the American republic. Published in 2015 by Oxford University Press (note: before Trump, and by a reputable academic publisher), his book seeks to answer a question which is indicative of a much broader trend: Why was it that Barack Obama’s foreign policy not only did not differ from that of George W. Bush, his presidential predecessor, but actually doubled down on a number of the policies implemented under Bush’s leadership, including a sixfold increase in the number of covert drone strikes in Pakistan? Beginning with this specific question, Glennon seeks to explain why American national security policy remains constant even when one President was replaced by another, who as a candidate repeatedly, forcefully, and eloquently promised fundamental changes in that policy. His answer follows the approach of 19th Century British essayist Walter Bagehot, who described the British political system in the Victorian era as a “double government.” In the US, this double government

is made up of two distinct groups, referred to by Glennon as the *Madisonians* (public political figures who fill positions in Congress, the Senate, and the Presidency) and the *Trumanites* (those who work behind the scenes in governmental organizations largely established during the presidency of Harry S Truman). It is the Trumanites who make the vast majority of the decisions when it comes to foreign policy, Glennon argues, and the Madisonians who must follow. Therefore, in the arena of foreign policy, it actually makes very little difference which political party or individual wields the apparent power; it is the hidden half of the double government which is pulling the strings. Glennon’s analysis is clear, well-written, and heavily supported by documentary evidence (the page count is inflated by over 100 pages of notes). His explanation of a phenomenon that many do not understand or cannot explain is eye-opening, as well as cause for deep concern. For anyone interested in learning why the “swamp” remains undrained until this very day, this book is required reading.

When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World (1956, 249 pages) is the story of Dorothy Martin and her small group of followers, and how their lives were impacted when her apocalyptic prophecy failed to come true. Martin believed that she had received messages from aliens revealing that a devastating natural

disaster would destroy much of the world on December 21st, 1954. Through the process of automatic writing, in which the writer serves as a conduit for messengers from “beyond,” Martin had been informed that she and her group of true believers would be rescued from the cataclysm by spaceships which would deliver them to safety on another planet. Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, the authors of *When Prophecy Fails*, had

been studying the historical results of failed prophecy when they read a newspaper story about Martin and her followers. Recognizing this as an opportunity to test their theories personally in a real-life situation, they inserted themselves into the group of “Seekers,” and chronicled events immediately leading up to December 21st as well as the disappointing aftermath of the failed prophecy. This is a very sad story from beginning to end, and the authors’ account often reads like a tragic novel and not as a sociological study. Martin herself believed fervently that she had been chosen to serve as a messenger of truth, and her followers were looking for hope and purpose in their lives. They were willing to grab hold of anything, no matter how ludicrous and self-contradictory, because they desperately wanted to believe. And when the



forecast disaster failed to happen, the true believers didn't abandon their trust in Martin and her message; instead, they searched for explanations that fit into their already-developed worldview, explained the failure away, and continued along the same path. In a world in which forecasts of impending doom, both scientific and religious, are commonplace, *When Prophecy Fails* helps us to understand why failed prophecies often lead to beliefs being held more strongly rather than abandoned completely.

Richard Pollak's *The Creation of Dr. B: A Biography of Bruno Bettelheim* (1997, 456 pages) is the story of a man with an invented past and fictional credentials, who wrote fabricated stories about the amazing successes of the Chicago school for mentally ill children that he took over in 1944. Along the way, he published several popular books on parenting and other subjects, worked as a university professor and magazine

columnist, and influenced a generation of parents in his role as "public intellectual." This book is a well-written and fascinating account of one man's life, and makes for captivating reading on that basis alone. But on a deeper level, the story of "Dr. B." reveals a great deal about how one person can fool even the "best and brightest" when he tells them what they want to hear. Bruno Bettelheim was not the only intellectual fraud who was active in 20th Century academia, so the example of his life and work, and the way in which

he managed to become an important figure in the academic world, functions as a cautionary tale. Even among the "experts" of the world, things are not always as they seem.

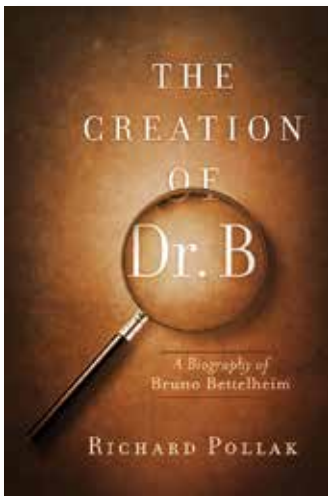
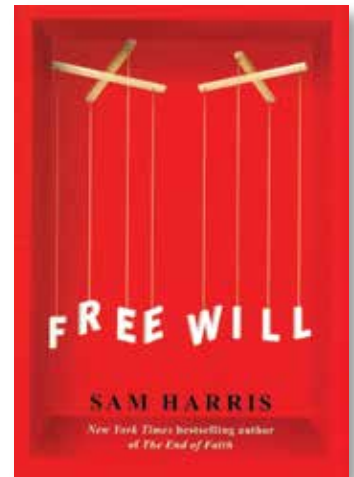
THE EDITOR – JON DYKSTRA

Children of the Reformation that we are, we understand our will is in bondage to sin. But that presents a conundrum of sorts, because if we can't help but sin, then how can we be held responsible by God for our sin? C.S. Lewis once noted that the act of turning to God wasn't something he chose to do, but that he was instead, the most reluctant of converts. So, again, if only God can enable us to choose for Him, how can we be held responsible for acting against Him? Calvinists answer this by humbly holding onto two seemingly conflicting ideas: we are responsible


for our sin, and yet God is sovereign over all. How can both be true? Well, as Dr. Bredenhof has put it, human beings are always "free to do what is according to their nature," though as an unregenerate creature, that will always involve sin. In his book *Free Will* (2012, 82 pages), atheist, and materialist Sam Harris attempts to offer a different sort of resolution. His is a godless answer, of course, and so the dilemma for him is a godless one as well: he wonders how mere chemicals in motion that we are (according to his evolutionary worldview) could have any responsibility for our actions.

We are, he argues, merely the sum of our inputs, no more responsible for our output than a computer would be. He wants us to acknowledge our lack of free will so that we'll be kinder to murderers who, meat robots that they are, shouldn't be held responsible for their "bad programming." But if they shouldn't be held responsible for their actions, *then why is Harris holding us responsible for our actions towards them?* Whether we torture or tickle them, no condemnation would be possible, since no one bears responsibility for any actions...ever. Harris ably demonstrates that his materialist worldview doesn't allow for responsibility, so when he argues we have a responsibility to treat criminals better, he proves a different point: that materialism falls short.

On July 29, 1994, Paul J. Hill, at one time an OPC pastor, shot an abortionist, his wife, and their bodyguard. The



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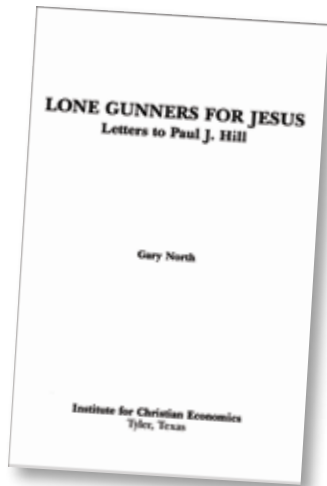


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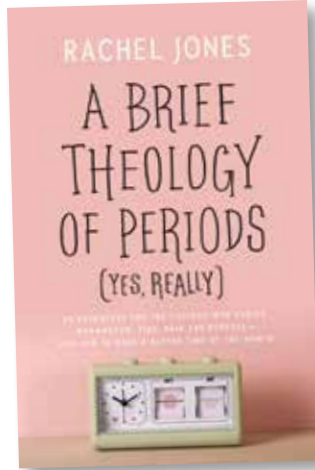
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abortionist and the bodyguard both died. Hill had been arguing for years that such action was biblical, and had been excommunicated for making his arguments publicly. In *Lone Gunners for Jesus: Letters to Paul J. Hill* (1994, 47 pages), written after the shooting, Gary North responded to Hill, explaining how his actions weren't biblical or effective because: Hill was never called to be judge and jury and God doesn't endorse

vigilante justice, Hill's acts only moved the public in a pro-choice direction costing more unborn lives, and while we are called to a public witness against the slaughter of the unborn, non-violent resistance – being beaten rather than being the beater – is the better witness. This slim volume is an important book to calm Christians whose love for the unborn is in danger of being misdirected, but it is also a good read for those who, whether in ignorance or a lack of compassion, don't stand up for the unborn at all. Go to tinyurl.com/lone-gunner to download the e-book for free.


Christians regularly forget that Jesus is Lord of every square inch of creation, but in her slim volume, *A brief theology of periods (yes, really)* (2021, 128 pages) Rachel Jones clearly gets it. She is speaking to women but shares information about periods and menstruation that will be helpful for men, and especially husbands. She touches on hormonal contraceptives and the trend to call women “people who menstruate” but the majority of the book is specifically on God's thoughts on periods, including what it says in Leviticus about a women's “uncleanliness,” and how we are to take this passage today. Jones asks lots of good questions, even if she isn't able to answer all of them (Did Eve have periods in the Garden of Eden?), and is an orthodox guide on this seldom discussed area of women's life.

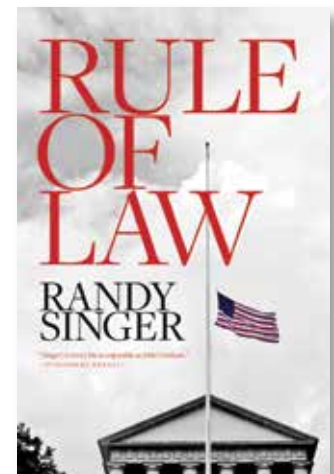



Glenn McCarty's *The Misadventured Summer of Tumbleweed Thompson* (2019, 327 pages) is a tale of two very different boys living out frontier life in 1876, and equally matched as both friends and rivals. Tumbleweed Thompson is a shyster and the son of a shyster, blowing into Rattlesnake

Junction as father and son peddle miracle medicine from the back of their wagon. Eugene Appleton, a good son of the town's pastor, is in the audience, watching as the peddlers are shown up and run out. But when Tumbleweed reappears on his ownsome, he pulls Eugene into a whole summer's worth of getting chased by smugglers, trailing train robbers, and trying to outdo each other for the attentions of the mayor's

daughter, Charlotte Scoggins, a misadventurous lass herself. It's evident the author is Christian, though that might not be apparent to the 10–14-year-old audience this is intended for because, even as Eugene means well, he doesn't always act well (and Tumbleweed often enough doesn't even mean well). That mostly gets sorted out at the end, when both boys do the very best thing, acting in defense of a widow and a man falsely accused. Loads of fun!

I picked this next novel up mostly because it shared a title with a non-fiction book André Schutten read earlier this year. It helped, also, that I'd read another by the author and loved it. *Rule of Law* (2017, 473 pages) is a legal thriller, and this time the action also includes a SEAL team storming an Arabic jail to free an imprisoned American journalist. When that mission takes a tragic turn, the fallout ends up in front of the Supreme Court. Author Randy Singer uses his fictional story to examine the real-world way in which the US government, and particularly the executive branch, has been acting as judge, jury, and executioner in placing foreign nationals on a “kill list,” and then taking them out, and those near them, via drone strikes. Singer doesn't seem to be arguing against all drone strikes. But the title he has chosen certainly references the idea that we all need and benefit from accountability, so we all – including even the president – need to be under the law. Our leaders must not act like they are above it, as dictators do. This is well written, with a great balance of action, some romance, unexpected courtroom twists, and some realistic, subtly woven in, wrestlings with God. Singer is rapidly becoming a favorite author after I, earlier this year, also enjoyed his *Directed Verdict*. 





by Christine Farenhorst

NANCY PELOSI STEALS COMMUNION

A man, given a handsome offer by his king for a piece of property he owned, refused to sell. It was not that the man meant to offend the king or that he intended to display disloyalty; nor could it be said of him that he was holding out for a better offer. No, the man felt that because this piece of land had been a gift from someone very special and because this gift had certain conditions attached to it, he should never part company with it...no matter what generous price was offered.

The man, of course, was Naboth and the coveting king's name was Ahab.

There are a great many truths we can imbibe from this story. One of these truths is that we, even in this day and age, should also hold onto godly, age-old commands and regulations given to us throughout the centuries in the Word of God. That is not always easy to do. And decisions to live according to God's

Law are not always accepted by those who want us to part with our "property."

MOTHER OF 5, DEATH DEALER TO MILLIONS

The Speaker of the US House, Nancy Pelosi, wants a "property" very badly. That is to say, she desires very much to partake of the Eucharist Mass in the Roman Catholic church of her home diocese of San Francisco.* She considers herself "a devout Roman Catholic," and very much covets partaking in the mass.

An American citizen, she was born Nancy Patricia D'Alesandro in 1940 in Maryland, and is of Italian descent. The last of six children, she was the first girl. Her father being the popular and very first Italian-American mayor of Baltimore, she suffered no hardships growing up. Her Dad and Mom were Democrats as well as dedicated Roman Catholics. Nancy's mother entertained vague hopes that her daughter might

become a nun. Nancy later commented:

"I didn't think I wanted to be a nun, but I thought I might want to be a priest because there seemed to be a little more power there."

Graduating from Trinity College in Washington, D.C. in 1962, she married Paul Pelosi, a banker, a year later. The couple had five children in quick succession - four girls and one boy.

Often volunteering for the Democratic Party, Nancy blossomed into a highly effective fundraiser. Rising through the ranks, she eventually ran for public office in 1987. Succeeding in this effort, she became a member of the House of Representatives. From 2007-2011 she served as Speaker of the House of Representatives, the first woman in U.S. history to do so, and in 2019 regained that same position. Her worldly goods status is estimated to be over \$16 million.

Reading through the lens of the world, it seems that Nancy Patricia D'Alesandro Pelosi has had a rather successful life. And yet presently she is forbidden to partake of something she covets. And that something is the Eucharist Mass in her hometown of San Francisco.

The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, which is a summary of Roman Catholic beliefs, is very clear about the sanctity of human life. It says:

“Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.”

This same Roman Catholic Catechism goes on to say:

“Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law.”

Nancy Pelosi is presently eighty-two years old. Born in 1940, she is an octogenarian and relatively speaking has one blue-veined foot in the grave. Her view of human life and of abortion diverge sharply from that of the catechism of her espoused Roman Catholic Church. Instead of touting the sacredness of life from conception on, she is a radical pro-abortionist - a person who calls for unrestricted abortion up to the time of birth. For many years she has encouraged and aided the Democratic Party to develop this radical pro-abortion agenda, calling for the American taxpayer to fund this heinous crime. Blocking the “Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act,” an act which would make the difference between life and death for countless children, she is heaping up iniquity after iniquity for herself and for her Party. Under her leadership, the U.S. House passed a radical pro-abortion bill in the fall of 2021 that would legalize abortions for basically any

reason up to birth nation-wide even if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.

Coming from a strict Roman Catholic family, and having been brought up in that faith which traditionally has opposed abortion, plus having had five children herself, it is difficult to say what has so twisted the heart and mind of Nancy to come out so aggressively for the termination of a little soul in the womb.

FINALLY, ACTION

In late May, Nancy's hometown priest, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone publicly announced that the congresswoman was not to receive communion because of her decades-long advocacy of abortion. The archbishop is sixty-five years old, seventeen years Nancy Pelosi's junior. Like Pelosi, he went to college, the Pontifical North American College at Rome, no less, and he is no dummy. He was also assistant for seven years at the Roman Catholic Church's supreme court on matters of canon law. He is firmly convinced that this discipline is for Nancy's own good to help save her soul. He is quoted as saying:

“After numerous attempts to speak with Speaker Pelosi to help her understand the grave evil she is perpetrating, the scandal she is causing, and the danger to her own soul she is risking, I have determined that she is not to be admitted to Holy Communion.”

Archbishop Cordileone went on to say that Nancy Pelosi may not receive communion

“... until such time as you publicly repudiate your advocacy for the legitimacy of abortion.”

A number of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church applauded the action of Archbishop Cordileone with comments such as those of Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois:

“I fully support and earnestly commend Archbishop Cordileone's action in regard to Speaker Pelosi. All politicians who promote abortion

should not receive holy Communion until they have repented, repaired scandal, and been reconciled to Christ and the Church.”

In response to Archbishop Cordileone's excluding her from communion, Pelosi retaliated on MSNBC's *Morning Joe* on May 24:

“I come from a largely pro-life, Italian-American Catholic family, so I respect people's views about that, but I don't respect foisting it onto others.”

Like Jezebel's husband, Ahab, did Nancy go home sullen and angry, because Archbishop Cordileone had told her: “I will not give you the Eucharist of my ancestors”? Did the Speaker of the US House lay on her bed pouting and did she refuse to eat?

The proverb “There is honor among thieves” does not ring quite true in this scenario. In spite of Archbishop Cordileone's well-meant condemnation and censure for a member of his flock, Nancy Pelosi was not persuaded. Using her fame and power, she did eventually receive Eucharist from a priest at a liberal Catholic Church in Washington. RP

ENDNOTE

* The Roman Catholic church, by the way, has the wrong idea about Mass. The Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord's Day 30, states this clearly:

“... the mass teaches that the living and the dead have not the forgiveness of sins through the sufferings of Christ unless Christ is still daily offered for them by the priests; and that Christ is bodily present under the form of bread and wine and is therefore to be worshipped in them. And thus the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.”

Picture of Pelosi is cropped from the original by Gage Skidmore (flickr.com) and used under a Creative Commons BY-SA 2.0 license.

News that inspires action!

by Mark Penninga

“Can we watch *World Watch* now?”

That’s what one of my six blond-haired children is bound to ask on most weekdays after the dinner dishes have been washed and their backpacks are cleaned out and put away.

World Watch is a ten-minute video news production, produced 250 times each year, by World News Group, the good folks behind the better-known *WORLD Magazine*. “We can’t keep your kids from growing up too quickly, but we can help them grow into humans equipped with news literacy and Biblical discernment. And make it fun, too...” explains the team at WorldWatch news. And I can testify that they have succeeded.

SCREEN TIME TO EMBRACE

I’m among many parents who has erred on the side of little screen time and almost no news coverage for my children, given how secular and troubling most coverage is. If I were to let the *CBC*, *CTV*, or *Global* educate my children about current events, I shouldn’t be surprised if they start to believe that we live in a perpetual climate “emergency” and that they should look to the government for their help and salvation.

But I also don’t want them to bury their heads in the sand either. I’m thankful to have found an alternative that not only educates my family about topics like the war in Ukraine and inflation, but that does so by concluding every episode with a reminder that we all need – “Whatever the news, the purpose of the Lord will stand.” Almost none of my friends have heard of the program. One thing that limits its reach is that it requires a paid subscription (\$7 US/month). Although that isn’t much, most people aren’t willing to pay for information in a world saturated



World Watch has a whole team of reporters!

with free content, not realizing that there is a great cost on their spiritual, emotional, and mental health.

Seeing the positive impact of *World Watch* on my family is one of the influences that led me to take on this role with *Reformed Perspective*, with a view to developing the organization to reach far more people with information that nourishes and edifies, grounded on the unchanging foundation of our sovereign God. Christians are generally blessed with solid preaching on Sundays. But much of the rest of the week they are saturated with content that is produced by people who have little use for God’s Word. And most of the Christian options that can be found, like *World Watch*, are American and don’t speak to the unique developments that we are experiencing outside of the USA.

A CANADIAN VENTURE

I started with *RP* on March 1st and have been so encouraged by the progress this organization has been making in recent years and months, by God’s grace. Some of the readers of this magazine will have received the donor update that we sent to *RP*’s donors recently, explaining the challenges we are facing as well as our vision for the future. I also recently made two fundraising trips, to southern BC and southern Ontario. We have been overwhelmed by God’s provision in response to these efforts, particularly through a

small number of very generous individuals and foundations who appreciate our vision and want to see many more people blessed with a *Reformed Perspective*.

As a result of this provision, our hope is to be able to expand the reach of our print magazine to reach close to 10,000 families each issue beginning in September. This would mean that

almost every church in Canada that is affiliated with NAPARC (URCNA, PCA, CanRC, FRC,

RPC, HRC, OPC, ARP) can receive complimentary copies of *RP*, with most of these churches receiving enough to be able to give a copy to each family!

It is very encouraging to us to see the magazine grow from reaching about 1,500 homes about five years ago, when it was only given to paid subscribers, to about 6,000 homes today, and the possibility of 10,000 homes later this year. Plus, the electronic reach has gone from almost zero to close to a million visits per year!

We recognize that we still have a long way to go, and much room to improve. Examples like *World Watch* and *WORLD Magazine* inspire us by what they can offer. Our hope is that *RP* can increasingly be a tool, among many others, that God uses to inspire His people to live lives of faith, hope, and love in this world.

And if our resources can expand to the point where our kids are eager to finish their chores so that they can read, listen, or watch them, that wouldn’t hurt either



You can find out more about *World Watch* at their website WorldWatch.News. And if you are in a position to support *Reformed Perspective*’s efforts, you can donate at ReformedPerspective.ca/donate. Mark Penninga is *Reformed Perspective*’s Executive Director.

RP's Summer Photo Contest

Enjoying God!

Whether this summer has you exploring new places, or staying in your own community, we can all experience joy in the Lord.

The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks “what is the chief end of man?” The answer is “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Scripture urges us to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4) even amidst challenging circumstances (Hab. 3:17-18). We can have joy in salvation, in revelation (both Scripture and in nature), in communion with God and His saints, and even in tribulation (James 1:2).

Our theme for this photo contest is to *capture ways in which we enjoy God*. It could be through a hike in the forest, at a summer camp with children, peaceful time in a garden, a beautiful sunset, and so many other ways.

Take a picture and share your joy!

Categories:

- Children and youth (under 18)
- Adults (18+)

Rules:

- Maximum 3 entries per person
- Must be an original photo, taken this year
- Include a line to explain how the photo relates to the theme (max. 100 words)
- Provide permission to RP to publish your photo online and/or in print if selected
- Include the name of the photographer, age, and photo title

Prizes:

- Winner and runner-up for both categories will be printed in *Reformed Perspective*
- Winner of each category will receive a \$100 gift certificate to ChristianBooks.com; runner-up will receive a \$75 gift certificate.

Deadline:

- Send your photo (high-resolution) to admin@reformedperspective.ca **before Aug 31, 2022**

